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### RTA Approves Oak Park Transit Alternatives Initiative

The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) has approved a transit study recommended by Oak Park as part of the Village's call to examine alternatives to Eisenhower Expressway expansion.

In the briefing last week of municipal staff from communities along the I-290 corridor, the RTA outlined its preliminary plans for a multi-modal corridor study first recommended by Village President Joanne E. Trapani at an April meeting of the West Central Municipal Conference, a regional council of west Cook County municipal governments. Trapani's recommendation was later unanimously supported by the North Central Council of Mayors which submitted an application, drafted with the assistance of Village staff, to the RTA requesting the agency's just announced action.

"I am very pleased that by working with our neighbors along the I-290 corridor we were able to focus attention on transit alternatives, including the more than 20 ideas the Village, through the work of its Eisenhower citizen advisory committee, have already submitted to IDOT, the RTA and the Toll Highway Authority," Trapani said.

"With the RTA now having taken a formal step to ensure that alternatives are studied, I believe the stage has been set for an objective examination of how best to address congestion in the I-290 / I-88 corridor by looking at more than just highway expansion."

RTA officials said they are now preparing a draft project management plan for the study, which is expected to begin in May and take two to two-and-a-half years to complete. The main elements of RTA plan will include the following:

- Market Analysis: Most of 2003 will be spent collecting and analyzing data about the travel market and traffic patterns for the entire I-290/I-88 corridor from Chicago to west of Lisle.
- Public Involvement: A communications and public outreach component will be built into the study to gather public input throughout the study project. The RTA also will be working through the three councils of mayors organizations in the study area to disseminate information and obtain input from elected officials of communities along the corridor.

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- Alternatives: Upon completion of the market analysis, transportation options to meet the identified mobility needs will be publicly solicited, defined and assessed.
- Transit-Supportive Community Development: In addition to the alternatives analysis, the study will include opportunities for local communities to develop land use policies/regulations and development strategies that would be a prerequisite for any of major new transit service in the corridor.

Estimated to cost \$2 million, funding for the study is expected to come from IDOT and other transportation planning funds such as the Unified Work Program administered by Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS), which also helped fund a I-90 northwest corridor study of transit options. IDOT already has requested RTA's assistance in reviewing transit alternatives as a result of input from Oak Park and other communities along the corridor.

The study is intended by the RTA to fully meet the alternatives analysis required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for a Major Investment Study, which the Village believes is required by federal law before any significant transportation project is undertaken.

When IDOT first began to study expanding I-290, the agency anticipated releasing design plans by the end of last year. IDOT now has indicated that design plans for expanding the highway will not be developed unless the RTA's market analysis indicates that the high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes under consideration for the Ike are a viable means of meeting needs identified by the market analysis.

"The RTA's initial description of its plan to integrate its transit study of the entire corridor into DuPage County with the Illinois Department of Transportation's I-290 plan is a positive sign that our efforts are making a difference in how this area's needs are being approached."

Among the transportation alternatives recommended by the Village are extending the CTA's Blue Line further west from Forest Park and expanding capacity of Metra's Union Pacific West Line. Metra recently announced it will seek expansion funding in the federal transportation legislation being considered this year.

For more information on the Village's position on the Eisenhower Expressway, call 708.358.5770 or visit [www.oak-park.us](http://www.oak-park.us) — click on news, then the I-290 icon along the right side of the page.