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Village Launches *Cap the Ike* Study

The Village of Oak Park has launched a comprehensive study to determine the feasibility of “capping” the Eisenhower Expressway between Harlem Avenue and Austin Boulevard with parks and open space, rebuilt transit stations, improved bike and pedestrian access, parking or other public facilities or private developments.

Phases of the *Cap the IKE Study* will range from community outreach and visioning, to data collection, engineering analysis and development of concepts based on public input. The final report, expected to be completed in about a year, will outline implementation steps and identify potential funding sources.

“We know that capping highways can be done. Caps over expressways exist around the country and throughout Europe,” said Village President Joanne E. Trapani. “A 1987 study determined that capping the Eisenhower was technically feasible, but expensive as a stand-alone project. What we don’t know are how best to accomplish it in Oak Park, what the current costs could be and what our residents would like to see incorporated into the design.”

The study will develop costs of various options, such as how big a cap or combinations of caps could be, as well as associated costs and impacts. The study also will gather information on what the community feels should be built over the expressway, a significant change in how the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) conducted the 1987 study, which did not involve any public input process, as will this Village-initiated study.

Several community outreach components have been incorporated into the planning process to maximize citizen participation. These include workshops, interviews, surveys, vision sessions and a dedicated site on the village’s web page.

A Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) will be formed to work with the consultants and the village throughout the study. The SAC will be comprised of village residents and other stakeholders, and will provide ongoing community input to both the consultants and the Village.

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**Cap Study
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Transportation agencies such as IDOT, the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) and PACE, the suburban bus service provider, and freight railroads, will be asked to participate with the stakeholder group in an effort to achieve as much of a consensus as possible about what would make a cap project workable in Oak Park.

“Public participation in this study is critical if we want to have influence over the future design of the Eisenhower Expressway,” Trapani said. “Major work on the Ike is inevitable. The roadway is reaching the end of its life expectancy. Whether the work will entail reconstruction of the roadway as is or widening to include high-occupancy vehicle lanes simply is not yet known.

“But what we do know is that we can’t sit back and wait to hear from IDOT about how their highway plans may impact the Village. This is an opportunity for the community to come together to show what we want the highway corridor through Oak Park to look like for the next 50 years.”

The preliminary time frame for the first part of the study is six to eight months, which will include developing preliminary concepts based on initial input, engineering analysis and information gathering. Once preliminary concepts have been developed, another four to six months are expected for community review and input, prior to the preparation of the final report document.

URS • TPAP, a planning, architecture and engineering consulting firm, was selected as the lead contractor through a competitive proposal and interview process to work with the Village on this unique project. This firm is based in Chicago and will involve a number of local employees and contractors.

This study is funded by an Illinois Tomorrow Grant of \$225,000 to which the Village will provide a \$25,000 match.

For more information on the study or to volunteer to serve on the Cap the IKE Stakeholder Advisory Committee, contact the Village Manager’s Office at 358.5778 or via email at CapTheIke@oak-park.us. Individuals interested in serving on the committee will be asked to fill out the standard Village citizen committee community service form available at the Village Clerk’s Office at Village Hall, 123 Madison St. The form also can be downloaded at <http://www.oak-park.us/public/pdfs/forms/VolunteerCommunityServiceDataSheet.pdf>

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