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Funding Secured for Preliminary Engineering of Ike Cap

A cap over the Eisenhower Expressway moved a step closer to reality with \$4.8 million in federal funding approved Friday by Congress for “preliminary engineering” of a plan to cover all or part of the Ike corridor through Oak Park.

Funding for continuing the Ike project was part of a bill that authorized nearly \$300 billion in transportation funding over the next six years to build and fix roads, and fund transportation safety and public transportation projects across the country. President George W. Bush is expected to sign the bill.

Village Manager Carl Swenson credited the work of U.S. Rep. Danny K. Davis and U.S. Senators Richard J. Durbin and Barack Obama for their leadership in making sure Oak Park interests were represented in the final bill. Davis secured \$800,000 for the engineering work in the House version of the highway bill, and Senators Durbin and Obama added \$4 million more to the final version of the bill that was sent to the President.

"On behalf of the citizens of the Village of Oak Park, I wish to express our sincere gratitude to Senators Durbin and Obama and Congressman Davis, and their dedicated staffs, for keeping alive our dream of capping the Ike," Swenson said Friday, just after receiving a personal telephone call from Senator Obama about the legislation.

"Senator Obama, who served as a member of the Senate–House Conference Committee on the bill, and Senator Durbin, serving in an important leadership capacity, were instrumental in advancing the interests of the citizens of Oak Park in this legislation."

The grant is the largest and latest in a series of Federal and state grants related to the proposed Oak Park Cap. Once the new federal transportation bill is signed into law by the President, more than \$6 million will have been dedicated to creating a plan to mitigate the negative impact of the Eisenhower Expressway on the community with a cap.

Three variations on a cap concept based on cost have been developed, an approach intended to accommodate various levels of potential funding that may be available by the time the Eisenhower Expressway is reconstructed in an estimated six to 10 years. All three variations incorporate features found most appealing by the community as expressed through an extensive public process and approved by the Village earlier this year.

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Transportation funding

Also included in the federal legislation is \$150,000 for street improvements in Oak Park, secured with the direct assistance of State Senator Don Harmon. These funds likely will go toward a major resurfacing project planned next year on Augusta Avenue between Ridgeland and Oak Park avenues. The project will improve the surface of the road for bicyclists who travel the Grand Illinois Trail which comes through Oak Park along Augusta.

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