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Ike Citizens Committee to Meet

The newly created Village of Oak Park I-290/Eisenhower Expressway Committee, an ad hoc citizens' advisory body to the Village Board, will hold its first meeting at 7 p.m., Thurs., March 14, in the Council Chamber of Village Hall, 123 Madison St.

Village staff will provide an overview of the proposed project and a summary of Village actions to date. A representative of the Village's Washington, D.C.-based technical, legal and lobbying firm also will outline federal legal requirements for major transportation projects, and present an overview of the strategy for ensuring the community's interests are protected.

"From what we heard at a meeting this week with representatives of the Illinois Department of Transportation, IDOT's schedule for conducting its current study has now been extended until the end of 2004," said Village Manager Carl Swenson.

"Clearly, the Village is in an excellent position to influence critical components of any major transportation project in that corridor before IDOT draws up its plans. We will work diligently to ensure that IDOT conducts all of the required environmental and alternatives analyses with full public input."

Appointed by the Village Board following an extensive selection process, the role of the committee is to provide input to the Board and be a conduit of information with the Oak Park community about IDOT plans to add high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes to Interstate 290. IDOT also has indicated it would like to move the Austin Boulevard and Harlem Avenue exits from their current center location to a right side configuration.

The 12-member citizen's committee includes residents with expertise in transportation, law, historic preservation and the environment. The Committee also includes residents who live close to the Eisenhower, and representatives of both the Harrison Business District and the Oak Park Ave./Eisenhower Business District, which was split in two by the original I-290 highway construction.

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Ike Committee to Meet  
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Chairing the committee is Lawrence B. Christmas, the former executive director of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission and a former Village President. Also on the committee is former State Senate President Philip J. Rock, who sponsored funding for a 1987 IDOT study that documented the feasibility of capping the Eisenhower Expressway to reconnect entire sections of the Village with parkland or open space over the expressway.

As part of the Village's official public information outreach, next Thursday's committee meeting will be broadcast live on the government cable access station, VOP-TV Channel 6. In addition, a section of the Village's website ([vil.oak-park.il.us/news/special\\_reports](http://vil.oak-park.il.us/news/special_reports)) has been dedicated to providing up-to-date official information and developments on the proposed Ike project. The website includes a detailed I-290 Fact Sheet that can be downloaded and reprinted for distribution, and other project related documents.

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