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*2030 Regional Transportation Plan Targeted*  
Village Seeks Removal or No-Build Clause for Proposed I-290 HOV Lanes

In an aggressive move to protect the community's interest, the Village has formally asked regional transportation planners to remove the I-290 high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane project from the region's long-term transportation plan or specify that it cannot be built until all required federally studies are completed.

The formal request was submitted Friday by the Village to the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS), the metropolitan planning organization that develops the long-term transportation planning for the Chicago area.

"The Village of Oak Park and its residents are extremely concerned that the I-290 HOV project may be allowed to proceed without the detailed studies of alternatives and impacts required by the federal highway funding regulations," Village President Joanne E. Trapani said in her letter to CATS.

"We believe that federal regulations require CATS to amend the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) to either remove the project entirely or specify a no-build condition until the required studies have been completed."

The letter, approved by the Village Board, was reviewed by the Village's citizens advisory committee at its first meeting on Thursday. The letter details the following three federally required analyses that the Village believes have not yet be satisfied in the planning for this HOV project to date:

?? A *major investment study* (MIS) which would identify viable alternative means of attaining the relevant transportation goals and evaluates the costs and impacts of the identified alternatives (23 Code of Federal Regulations 450.318).

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?? A *congestion management study* (CMS) which would evaluate the most efficient and effective means of alleviating current congestion on I-290 (23 Code of Federal Regulations 450.320, 500.109).

?? A *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) study which would evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the alternatives identified in the other studies (23 Code of Federal Regulations 450.318(f), 771.123).

In addition, the Village is urging CATS to add a proposed cap over the Eisenhower Expressway through Oak Park to the 2030 plan. The Village has submitted a grant application to CATS for funds to update a previous study completed by IDOT in 1987. The Village told CATS that a cap could help mitigate adverse impacts if the HOV expansion project or any other major reconstruction of the I-290 corridor through Oak Park is pursued. A cap also would help improve air quality and use green space or recreational areas to reconnect Oak Park as community from the divide created by the original construction of the Expressway.

The Village also suggested in its comments to CATS that the CTA Blue Line el service that runs through Oak Park, but terminates in Forest Park, be extended to address congestion as part of the 2030 Regional Transportation Plan that will be adopted by CATS later next year. The Village, in conjunction with the other members of the North Central Council of Mayors representing communities along the I-290 in western Cook County, will within the next month formally submit a Blue Line extension to Lisle as a project for CATS consideration.

“Our summary comments to CATS represent the foundation for the Village’s efforts to protect the interests the community, but they are only a start,” President Trapani stated. “As a community, working together, we will have to remain diligent in the months and years to come as we work with key transportation policy decision makers. Our goal must be to ensure that we take full advantage of every opportunity to make sure our concerns about this project heard and addressed.”

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At a “stakeholders” meeting on March 6, Illinois Department of Transportation officials said they intend to comply with the federal requirements to evaluate alternatives and impacts, and that completion of preliminary environmental and design phase of the project is not anticipated before Dec. 31, 2004. The meeting, held in Forest Park, was sponsored by IDOT officials to brief municipal and transportation planning agencies on the status of its planning for the I-290 corridor.

“While we are encouraged by the commitment expressed by transportation officials at the stakeholders meeting, the Village must closely monitor IDOT as these Phase I studies proceed,” said Village Manager Carl Swenson. “We will insist that IDOT scrupulously follow all applicable requirements, as well as continue to investigate all available options to ensure that the interests of Oak Park residents are protected.”

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