

Rallying together against longer Rt. 53

*Opponents seek
support in person*

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As Hawthorn Woods Mayor Joe Mancino outlined the history and village concerns about a proposed Route 53 extension for about 300 interested observers during a town-hall meeting Monday, a much smaller contingent waited patiently outside.

Members of Livable Lake County, a Grayslake-based group that is accelerating its "Stop the Route 53 tax hike" campaign, were seeking signatures on post cards to send to Gov. Bruce Rauner. That followed a stint a few weeks ago where the group doubled expectations by collecting about 1,000 signatures at its booth at the Lake County Fair.

There's also an online petition. But the emphasis has been on face-to-face contact ahead of an eventual decision by the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority on whether to proceed to preliminary engineering and an environmental impact study in the revived push for the controversial road and associated improvements to Route 120.

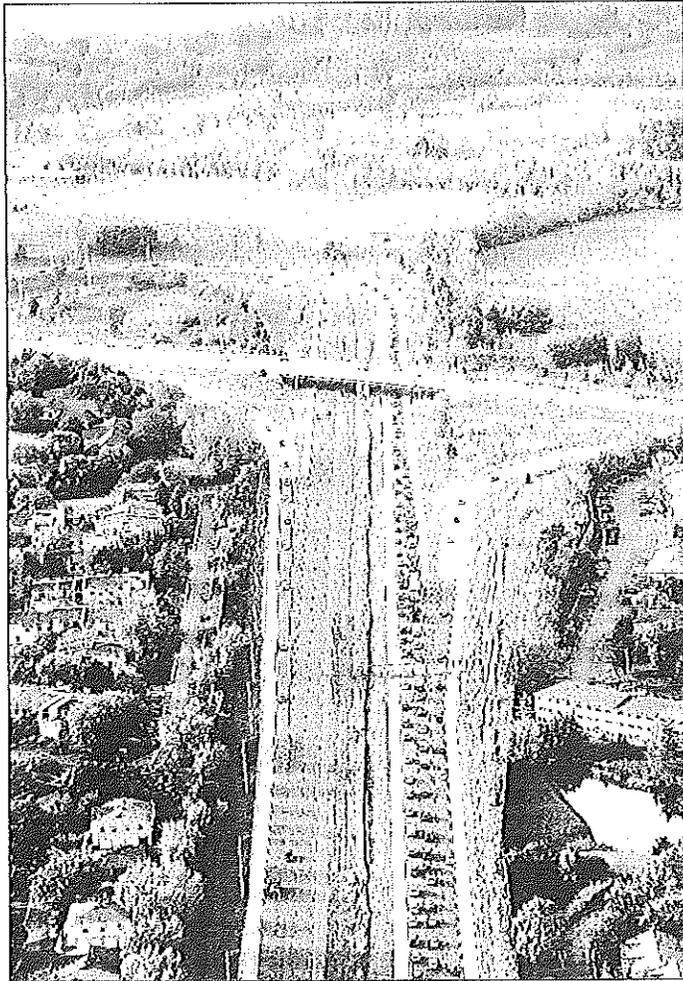
"We've been trying to do in-person petitioning. We're finding the public is uninformed about the issue," said Barbara Klipp, a Grayslake resident and one of the group organizers. "Anything that's related to Route 53, we try to go."

And they have help. A group called Long Grove United took a box of post cards, Klipp said. Livable Lake County is seeking partners to create a broader organization.

"We are hopefully going to form an alliance with Barb's group," said Marcia Marshall,

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Rallying: Rt. 53 becomes part of Long Grove group's concerns



STEVE LUNDY/slundy@dailyherald.com, 2014

Route 53 looking north from Lake-Cook Road, where the expressway ends.

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organizer of the Long Grove group that formed in 2012 to educate residents on various issues, such as a village property tax and public roads, and to get people to the polls. Route 53 is an emerging issue for the group, Marshall said.

"We are just beginning to get information on Route 53, and what we're learning is very alarming. It's not the cost in dollars and cents, although it's astronomical and hard to fathom." Quality of life and environmental concerns are other factors, she said.

Opposition has been a part of the Route 53 process since it was proposed more than 50 years ago. Interest in the project has ebbed and flowed since, but the most recent push for a four-lane, limited-access, parkway-style road plan is considered the last, best chance to proceed. County officials and many communities staunchly back the project to reduce traffic congestion and attract development.

But five towns along the corridor — Hawthorn Woods, Long Grove, Kildeer, Mundelein and Round Lake — are wary of mechanisms being

considered to help fund the \$2.35 billion to \$2.65 billion proposal. They fear losing local control over development decisions and say all communities should share the cost via a special taxing district being considered along the corridor.

Mancino said he organized the town hall meeting to educate residents and was not surprised by the turnout. About a third were from out of town, with several county board members and transportation officials in the audience.

The presentation, which has been posted at www.vhw.org, was specific to Hawthorn Woods and concerns such as noise, pollution and impact on the environment from elevated portions of the road.

"We really tried our best to present a balanced story," Mancino said.

Lake County Board Chairman Aaron Lawlor said all concerns must work together to answer questions about the complex project.

"There were a number of valid concerns, and a number of inaccuracies that we're going to address," he said of Mancino's presentation.

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