

5 Lake County towns unite against Route 53 planning process

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A letter of support for the Route 53/120 extension posted this week by leadership in 40 Lake County municipalities came on the heels of an oppositional statement from five other villages in the path of the proposed roadway.

Addressed to the Illinois Tollway, a letter signed June 29 by leaders in Hawthorn Woods, Kildeer, Long Grove, Mundelein and Round Lake expressed collective concern with the planning process.

Officials with both the Tollway and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) were told that "the communities in (the roadway's) path continue to develop, which increases the complexity of designing an appropriate roadway."

The letter objects to concepts discussed by a Route 53/120 corridor Land Use Committee, which is being facilitated by CMAP as part of the Tollway's feasibility study. Specific objections relate to such possibilities as creating a regional planning authority to review development concepts within a one- or two-mile radius of the route's centerline.

"The concept of regional planning for such an extension through professionally planned communities indicates a subscription to regional land controlled by a Corridor Planning Council or other such created agency," the letter states. "As municipal leaders, we voice strong opposition to the loss of local land-use controls for the land planning, development and zoning authority for properties within our individual municipal jurisdictions."

Elaborating on the letter this week, Hawthorn Woods Mayor Joseph Mancino it was part of an effort to give a stronger voice to "the five main municipalities that (the roadway) will go through."

"There really is an effort to show a large consensus, but the villages that face the largest impact should have the strongest voice," Mancino said Friday, adding that many other communities along the proposed path "are not being asked to give up what we've been asked to give up."

Mancino said that roster would include most of the 40 communities whose mayors and village presidents signed a July 22 letter to the Tollway expressing support for the proposed \$2.3 billion Route 53 extension north from Lake Cook Road. Envisioned as a four-lane, tolled parkway, the project would feature adjoining construction of a Route 120 bypass from Wildwood to the Round Lake area.

This week's letter from the 40 mayors, which was also signed by Lake County Board Chairman Aaron Lawlor, asked new Tollway Board Chairman Robert Schillerstrom and three incoming board members for their "continued support with the next engineering and environmental studies required to keep this project moving forward."

In expressing a "commitment to advancing Illinois Route 53," the letter added that the Land Use Committee "is

continuing its collaborative planning efforts with the corridor communities to develop a broad land use strategy for the entire corridor."

Mancino noted that two of the villages represented on the June 29 oppositional letter — Mundelein and Round Lake — are also represented on the statement of support that went public this week. He added that the missive signed by the five municipalities should not be read as outright opposition.

"I think the letter does not debate the road itself. The letter debates how the road is being proposed," said Mancino, adding that stronger assurances are needed about sticking points like how much control a corridor land-use agency would have over local-development decisions near interchanges and the path itself.

He also expressed concern about concepts discussed by a finance committee that envision tax-increment financing districts along the roadway corridor to help fund construction, which the Tollway has stated can't be covered by the agency's existing revenue streams.

According to a statement from the Illinois Tollway, the current Land Use Committee is charged with recommending adoption of a land-use plan, which "municipalities and Lake County will ultimately be asked to vote to approve. (This) effort is in response to the Blue Ribbon Advisory Council's recommendation for a corridor plan that integrates land use, transportation, economic development and open space."

The June 29 letter from the five municipalities stressed that the launching of any plan should be subject to scrutiny by all members of the committee.

"As municipal leaders, we expect the transparency of such a plan to be vetted in public at our respective municipal board levels before we can vote to recommend our municipality's sentiment," the letter states. "We look forward to receiving the detailed plan first (before) we can consider supporting any Corridor Plan."

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