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# Regional planning agency hears from Route 53 critics

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Pioneer Press

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Critics, planners of Route 53 met in Libertyville and Kildeer

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**O**ut of approximately 225 people who came to a pair of open houses about the proposed extension of Illinois Route 53, fans of the idea were hard to find.

The [Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning](#) — one of several agencies pushing for the completion of Route 53, and the one that controls which projects receive federal funding — held open houses on Oct. 14 in [Libertyville](#) and Oct. 15 in Kildeer to meet residents who are interested in the concept, or expect to be affected by it.

Toward the end of the Kildeer meeting, CMAP principal Jason Navota said he had seen a mix of opinions in the past two nights. Daniel Grove, principal of design and planning firm Lakota Group, said he was pleased with the 75 visitors who came the night before, and the 150 who showed up the second night.

"That would speak to more people coming out in opposition to the road," Grove said as a group of those opponents, clad in matching T-shirts, milled around him. "We've been trying to have discussions about this with them. I'm glad they're active."

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Grove said both nights featured graphics and charts about the road's possible impact blown up onto large poster boards. Both he and several of the Oct. 15 visitors noted that they contained only information that had already been published. Visitors said they were happy to find that leaders in several capacities — including officials from Long Grove Village Hall and other municipalities — came to the meetings, giving worried citizens a chance to at least be heard.

For Roswitha Hammack of Hawthorn Woods, the question she faced was how Route 53 might

affect her.

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"My life is going to be ruined, that's the answer," she said.

At the meeting, she met Hawthorn Woods neighbors Barbara Barrie and Kim Starke, who also did not appreciate the information offered.

"I've lost half of my assessed value, and the taxes have gone up," Starke said.

The two gatherings centered around the Illinois Tollway's decades-old desire to extend Route 53 — the toll-free highway it owns in western Cook County — from its current northern end point at Lake Cook Road in Buffalo Grove up to Illinois Route 120 in Grayslake. With a price tag currently estimated at about \$2.3 billion, the proposal would create a 12.5-mile road that officials have said would be cognizant of noise concerns, growing traffic, commercial development and sensitive wetlands.

Barrie said a major highway pumping commuters through northwest Lake County was not why she moved to her presently rural area.

"I enjoy the peace and tranquility," she said.

"And you pay a ton of taxes for it," Starke added.

The three new friends also discussed storm-water runoff, and feared that the maps that the organizers brought did not accurately reflect flooding concerns.

Mary Conway, a real estate agent, said she came to the open house to pick up any new information she could scrounge. Looking at one of the maps of what her business area could become, she worried about how a new road would affect the market.

"I'm just trying to wrap my head around what's happening here," Conway said. "Right now, no one in this area can sell."

But if the highway is built, its planners expect that there will be plenty to buy. Figures shown to visitors at the meeting predicted considerable residential and commercial growth along the renovated Route 120:

- More than 3.26 million square feet of retail
- Between 9,400 and 10,000 single-family homes

Along Route 53, though, estimates call for less growth:

- 1 to 1.2 million square feet of new retail
- 2,500 to almost 3,000 single-family homes

The public input effort will continue as CMAP officials are requesting opinions, concerns and insights at [lakecorridorplan.org](http://lakecorridorplan.org) or [info@cmap.illinois.gov](mailto:info@cmap.illinois.gov), through Oct. 23.

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