



Illinois Department of Natural Resources

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JB Pritzker, Governor
Colleen Callahan, Director

MINUTES

Illinois Route 53 Expansion Land Alternative Use Task Force

Monday, December 20, 2021

10:00AM

Virtual Meeting

Dan Lewis, Advisor at the IL Department of Natural Resources and the point-person for administrative support for this Task Force, began the meeting at 10:01am by introducing the task force members and then calling for the nomination of a Chairperson for the Task Force.

State Representative Daniel Didech nominated State Senator Melinda Bush and State Representative Chris Bos to serve as Co-Chairs of the Task Force. There were no other nominations and the members of the Task Force voted to approve of this nomination.

Senator Bush gave the floor to Reed Panther, a Transportation Planner with the IL State Toll Highway Authority, who provided a historical overview (**attached**) of the IL Rt. 53 expansion project, which dates as far back as the 1960s and was proposed in order to alleviate traffic and account for population growth. After many studies and decades of commission meetings and public input, the expansion of Rt. 53 was essentially shelved.

Senator Bush remarked that the Task Force should collect information to help us identify how we purchased the various parcels of land and how we are allowed to use each parcel. Laura Mlacnik, Bureau Chief of Land Acquisition at the IL Department of Transportation, stated that IDOT is putting together a map of all parcels for the Task Force and indicated that not all of the parcels in question have already been acquired by the State. Stacy Meyers, Senior Counsel with Openlands, shared their parcel map with the group and indicated that she will assist Laura with the mapping project. Lake County Board Member John Wasik and Reed also indicated that they have or know of GIS data that could supplement IDOT's work. Senator Bush and others asked that IDOT present their map(s) at the next meeting.

Grayslake Mayor Rhett Taylor noted that information on all private lands, including zoning, will be importation information as well and Long Grove Mayor Bill Jacob added that we need to know if any land has restrictions that we have to be aware of. Mayor Taylor asked if this project is something we envision the State wholly owning, or if the State would be willing/wanting to sell or transfer the land to the county forest preserve or municipalities. Senator Bush indicated that it would likely be the latter. Lake County Board Member Marah Altenberg requested that members and agencies with interests in particular parcels and areas flag that for the group. Laura stated that IDOT has an interest

in the areas that could be used for a IL-120 bypass in the future, but agreed with Senator Bush that this is a separate issue.

Mundelein Mayor Steve Lentz brought up the upcoming Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy that will be released by Lake County Partners. Lake County Board Member Jessica Vealitzek confirmed that this will be released next month. Senator Bush indicated that the Task Force could discuss/review this in March.

Laura indicated that she would ask IDOT to provide drone footage of the corridor and Barbara Klipp, Executive Director of the Midwest Sustainability Group, discussed touring the area. Barbara also asked for an informal show of hands for support for a greenway/trail. There were no objections, with many indicating their support. Mayor Lentz replied that he cannot commit to a trail because the Village is still gathering information and he is hesitant for IDOT to unload land that they could need for a road one day. Senator Bush, while highlighting the importance and draw of open lands in Lake County, reiterated at this was an informal poll of members and that everything would be considered equally.

Senator Bush called for public comments. Ian Kelly of Highland Park spoke about the need for more green and recreational space. Representative Bos and Representative Didech both thanked everyone for participating and indicated that they are eager to begin these conversations. The Representatives and Senator Bush indicated that on or around Friday, January 28 would be the best day for the next meeting, which could feature presentations from IDOT, the Lake County Forest Preserve District, and Lake County Stormwater Management.

Minutes by Dan Lewis, IDNR
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Illinois Route 53 & Illinois Route 120 Historical Overview

1960s



1962

Regional plans first identify north-south circumferential interstate.

1964

IL 53 route location decision (IDOT).

1963-1976

As early as the 1960s, regional plans have singled out the need for an improved transportation link between Lake County and the rest of northeastern Illinois. IDOT recorded centerlines for the proposed Illinois Route 53/120 North Extension in Lake and McHenry Counties starting in 1963 and then began acquiring properties based on the recorded centerlines.

The enactment of NEPA in 1969 required the IL Route 53 proposal to be subject to further environmental analysis and documentation.

1964-1990

Two environmental studies initiated/suspended; protective acquisition advanced (IDOT).

1989-1997

FAP 432: Corridor Feasibility Study (IDOT)

This feasibility study evaluated eastern and western alignment alternatives alongside the recorded alignment corridor evaluated in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) prepared in the 1970s. The alternatives resulted in significantly greater impacts than the recorded alignment due to area development patterns.

In 1993, the Village of Long Grove proposed alternatives to be compared to FAP 342 (redesignated from FAP 432) and US Route 12. IDOT completed the requested evaluation in 1994 and found that the alternatives were not reasonable due to design viability concerns.

1980s



IDOT then completed the [US 12 Freeway Proposal \(Lake-Will Expressway North Study\)](#), a study of US Route 12 as an alternative to FAP 342. As compared to FAP 342, the US Route 12 Alternative was found to provide less transportation benefits, fewer potential impacts to natural resources, higher potential socio-economic impacts, and higher costs.

1991-1997

IL 53 Extension EIS initiated/suspended (IDOT/ ISTHA).

1993

Illinois Legislature authorized ISTHA to include IL 53 in tollway system expansion plan.

1998-2001

Lake County Transportation Improvement Project (LCTIP) EIS

IDOT and the Illinois Tollway formed the Lake County Transportation Improvement Project (LCTIP). LCTIP advanced development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which identified three finalist alternatives: No-Action Alternative (Baseline), IL Route 53 Freeway/Tollway Alternative and IL 83/US 45 with US Route 12 Alternative.

The Draft EIS was circulated for comment in 2001, but the project did not advance due to conflicting priorities.

2000

CATS 2020 RTP - Regional Long Range Plan Identifies Illinois Route 53 as a priority project.

2006-2009

Lake County establishes IL 120 CPC which developed the IL 120 Unified Vision Plan.

1990s



2000s



2009

76% of Lake County voters support an advisory referendum on IL 53.

Central Lake Thruway: Unified Vision

Representatives from 11 municipalities formed the Corridor Planning Council (CPC) to establish a framework for a future Phase I study along the IL Route 120 corridor. An improved IL Route 120 would enhance east-west transportation across Lake County and expand economic development opportunities. The study concluded with identification of a locally preferred plan, and a recommendation to advance a Phase I study.

2010

CMAP's GO TO 2040 RTP - Regional Long Range Plan Identifies IL 53 as a priority project to address region-wide congestion.

2011-2015

Blue Ribbon Advisory Council (BRAC) Resolution and Summary Report – 2012

The Blue Ribbon Advisory Council (BRAC) was established by the Illinois Tollway in fall 2011. The Council consisted of public officials and representatives from business, labor, planning, and environmental groups, and was tasked with developing a regional consensus on whether the Tollway should move forward and providing guidance to the design features and financing of a potential IL 53/120 project.

Consensus: Council agreed a new Route 53/120 project should be advanced to enhance mobility, relieve congestion, promote orderly development and ensure environmental sensitivity.

Next steps: Initiate corridor plan, determine project financing, develop detailed design concept, secure local, state, and federal authorizations, with the involvement of local communities of Lake County.

2010s



In 2015, the [Illinois Route 53/120 Corridor Land Use Strategy](#) was advanced by CMAP to complement development of the Illinois Route 53/120 corridor project. It was meant to guide decision making and discussions with stakeholders and agencies while developing “the most balanced, context-sensitive, and asset-oriented corridor”. At the Land Use Committee’s final meeting, the Strategy was adopted with 15 votes in support and 5 votes against.

After the BRAC study was completed, a Finance Committee led by the Illinois Tollway was formed to provide an analysis and funding recommendations. The recommendations from the March 2015 [Feasibility Analysis Report Illinois Route 53/120](#) included innovative local contributions, tolling, and federal/state funding contributions. At the Finance Committee’s final meeting, the Final Report and Recommendations were approved with 22 votes in support, 1 vote against, 1 recuse and 2 abstentions.

The October 2015 [Draft Feasibility Analysis Report](#) evaluated project costs and viability of BRAC Resolution and Summary Report recommendations. It identified differences in BRAC recommendations and Tollway standards as potential risk areas.

2017 - 2019

Tri-County Access (TCA) Project

The TCA Project, led by the Illinois Tollway in cooperation with FHWA and IDOT, was initiated with the objective of delivering an EIS documenting a recommended and federally approved transportation solution to the traffic congestion in Lake, northern Cook, and eastern McHenry counties. In July 2019, the agencies decided to suspend the TCA Project.