

# Citizens for Appropriate Transportation (CAT) Issue Brief

## Eisenhower Transportation Corridor

### PARKS AND HISTORIC PROPERTIES – PROTECTING OUR RESOURCES

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and the CTA want to rebuild the expressway and the Blue Line Forest Park Branch. We need to be sure they protect our parks and historic properties as they prepare plans. The photographs below show how close some parks in Austin, Oak Park, and Forest Park are to the Eisenhower Transportation Corridor. The close proximity of IDOT's proposed 8 lanes (versus the 6 lanes now) and the height and length of the proposed right-hand side ramps at Austin and Harlem raise concerns about air and noise pollution, property values, economic development opportunities, and social and visual connections. IDOT and the CTA will address station access by all modes, bridge designs, and the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Rebuilding is a major effort, so construction mitigation measures and the location of construction staging areas are important.

#### 1. Columbus Park – IDOT's Proposed Austin Ramps are higher than the Berm



#### 2. Barrie Park & Center – Oak Park has a water reservoir under the Tennis Courts



#### 3. Rehm Park –has a Swimming Pool and a Diving Pool



#### 4. Conservatory – was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on March 8, 2005



**5. Wenonah Park** – Home Avenue Bridge in the background on the right



**6. Forest Park Dog Park** – CTA Blue Line Train and expressway in the background



**7. Forest Park Veterans Park** – Eisenhower Transportation Corridor in the background



**8. Park in Forest Park** – has a pool, fields, and tennis courts. Expressway in the background.



Section 4(f) in the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966 requires transportation agencies using federal funds for major projects to analyze impacts on parks, recreational areas, and historic sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It requires the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to determine impacts are either de minimis or to prepare a Section 4(f) evaluation to determine if a feasible and prudent alternative exists that avoids Section 4(f) properties. If there is a prudent and feasible alternative, IDOT and FHWA must select it. If not, FHWA can select the alternative that causes the least overall harm. FHWA must also find all possible planning to minimize harm has occurred. *“An alternative is feasible if it can be constructed as a matter of sound engineering. ... An alternative is prudent if it meets the test in 23 CFR 774.17, which includes factors assessing safety or operational problems; how well project purpose and need are met; the severity of social, economic, or environmental impacts; and the severity of impacts to environmental resources protected under other Federal statutes.”*<sup>1</sup>

Under Section 4(f), a project can use property in three ways: (1) **permanently** in the transportation facility, (2) **temporarily** (typically during construction), and (3) **Constructive Use** (land not used for transportation, but its value is meaningfully reduced or lost for Section 4(f) purposes).

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966 created the National Register of Historic Places. It lists Columbus Park and the Oak Park Conservatory. If there are negative impacts on Columbus Park or the Conservatory, IDOT must seek ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate them.

Parks are important part to our quality of life. By law, IDOT must account for them.

*Rick Kuner June 2014*

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/4fAtGlance.asp> (accessed on May 14, 2014)