

CITIZENS FOR APPROPRIATE TRANSPORTATION (CAT)

Rick Kuner

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The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) studies on the Eisenhower Transportation Corridor are close to completion.

IDOT's Preferred Build Alternative adds a High Occupancy Toll Lane in each direction for cars with three or more persons (HOT 3+). There will be eight lanes from Hillside to Wells Street. IDOT will reconstruct the expressway from Cicero Avenue to Mannheim Road and provide right side ramps at the Austin and Harlem Interchanges. IDOT will use Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) to manage traffic in real time. ITS includes Dynamic Message Signs, Ramp Meters, Signal Coordination, Pedestrian Countdown Signals, Cameras, Emergency Vehicle Preemption, and Connected Vehicles.

CTA's Vision / Feasibility Study recommends rebuilding the Forest Park Blue Line. The new Austin, Oak Park, and Harlem Stations will have entrances at both ends. Proposed station ramps have 15-foot horizontal sections every 30 feet. CTA's proposed platforms are 18.4 feet at Austin, 17.9 feet at Oak Park, and 20.9 feet at Harlem instead of the current 13 feet. Wider platforms are required to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and National Fire Protection Association Standard 130 (NFPA). The CTA has agreed IDOT can use up to 10 feet of the CTA's corridor width for the expressway. Maintenance space for the CTA will be alongside the westbound track.

VILLAGE – IDOT LETTER OF INTENT (LOI)

The Village of Oak Park and IDOT entered into a Letter of Intent for the Eisenhower Expressway Reconstruction Project in August 2016. The Village concurs with IDOT's proposed improvement plan. IDOT will rebuild the seven Oak Park bridges (Harlem, Home, Oak Park, East, Ridgeland, Lombard, and Austin) with wider sidewalks and roadways to accommodate bus transit and bicycles where appropriate. The Home Avenue Bridge will serve just pedestrians and bicyclists. IDOT will construct a Shared Use Path for pedestrians and bicyclists on the north side of the expressway from Harlem to Austin provided the Village pays some of the costs. IDOT will replace or rehabilitate water and sewer lines, expressway lighting, and reconstruct sections of Garfield, Harrison, and Flornoy impacted by reconstruction. IDOT will take another vote on noise walls near the start of construction. Improvements to the arterial streets are to be determined.

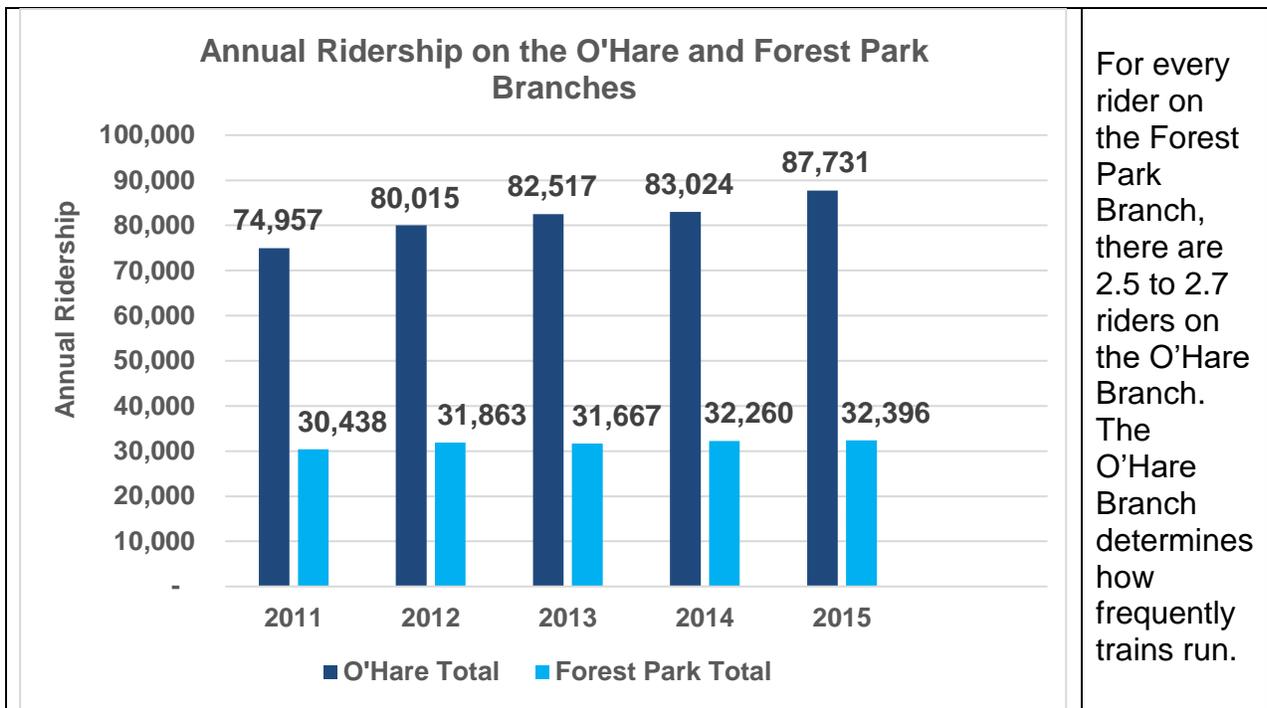
The LOI allocates costs between the Village and IDOT. The Village will pay some of the costs for traffic signal modernization, emergency vehicle pre-emption, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and roadway lighting. The LOI will lead to an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between the two government entities in Phase 2 (Construction Drawings and Specifications) of IDOT's Study with the understanding the IGA may include additional issues not in the LOI.

The LOI resolves some issues and postpones decisions on others. The Village must resolve some issues on its own.

COMMENTS

IDOT’s Preferred Alternative does not have enough capacity and will not have enough capacity in the future even after adding two HOT 3+ Lanes. Under current conditions, IDOT says weekday congestion lasts for about 17 hours. IDOT projects a 45-minute reduction for the Year 2040. Driverless cars and crash avoidance systems may increase expressway capacity, but when and by how much is uncertain.

The CTA’s Forest Park Branch has excess capacity. The more motorists who switch to the CTA, the better. The CTA already transports *Captive Riders* (no access to a car), but needs to attract more *Choice Riders* (access to a car, but choose transit). Adding bike racks at CTA and Metra stations will extend catchment areas for passengers.



The CTA should extend the Blue Line to at least 1st Avenue. They already own the right-of-way from the Forest Park Yards to the east side of the Des Plaines River. The further west the CTA intercepts drivers via Park-and-Ride facilities, the better because that will reduce the number of vehicles on the expressway. Not extending the Blue Line west of Forest Park will mean more expressway congestion. The CTA is not extending it because other projects have higher priority and the lack of funding.

Using all or part of CSX’s space would improve IDOT’s proposed interchange designs at Harlem and Austin, allow all lanes to meet the 12-foot wide Interstate standard instead of the proposed four 12-foot and four 11-foot lanes, and allow wider shoulders for emergency use. The LOI says IDOT shall evaluate the benefits and costs of lowering bridge heights if the CSX ceases operations on their tracks through Oak Park in a “reasonable timeframe prior to completing Phase II Engineering.” Lower bridge heights lessen negative neighborhood impacts. The CAT Working Group

suggested student exhibits on the bridges at the CTA stations and pedestrian lookouts on major bridges to allow children to watch the trains.



IDOT's proposed interchanges at Austin and Harlem move ramps closer to north side neighborhoods. There are negative air and noise pollution impacts from higher ramps. IDOT is proposing horizontal beams across the through lanes at Harlem and Austin. Under some sunlight conditions, the beams will cause a rapid change between sunlight and shade for drivers, raising the crash risk.

IDOT's proposed shoulder widths are substandard, putting police, fire / paramedics, and motorists at risk. During congested hours, emergency vehicles use the shoulders. When police make stops, their first priority is the safety of motorists and police. Police officers will not make stops if conditions are unsafe.

Sections of Harrison and Garfield have substandard widths. IDOT recommends right turn in / right turn out at Garfield and Austin. Emergency vehicles, especially from the South Fire Station must have quick access to the Austin and Harlem ramps. Safer crossings at Austin and Harlem will accommodate pedestrians using the CTA stations.

During the projected eight-year construction period, there are likely to be negative impacts on property values because of reduced demand by prospective buyers. Possible remedies include a Buy Back Program, low interest rehabilitation loans from the Village financed by tax-exempt municipal bonds, and a program like the Equity Assurance Program.

Long-term negative impacts on property values are also a concern. Lowering ramp heights at Austin and Harlem, attractive corridor edge design, and air – noise mitigation measures would help.

Ground Vibration is a major concern. The CAT Working Group made four recommendations. Property owners should take videos and photographs of existing building conditions shortly before construction starts. Property owners can add an insurance rider to their homeowner's policy with a ten-year tail-coverage. Resolve disputes by binding arbitration instead of litigation. IDOT's construction contract should

withhold a percentage of each invoice until the contractor completes all work satisfactorily and use this money to settle any ground vibration damage claims.

During the estimated eight-year construction period, people will have to change how they make trips and businesses disruption will occur. IDOT estimates it will take about 18 months to rebuild each bridge, forcing motorists, transit riders, bicyclists, and pedestrians to use alternate routes and allow more time for each trip. The CTA is a viable option during expressway reconstruction. When IDOT reconstructs the CTA Bridge over the expressway west of Circle Avenue, the CTA will provide shuttle bus service from Forest Park to the Harlem Station. Coordination among IDOT, CTA, Metra, PACE, and the municipalities during construction is essential.

During the construction period, the IGA should account for access to CTA stations, alternate travel routes, emergency vehicle access, work hours, ground vibration damage, air and noise pollution, business disruption, dust, and debris.

UNRESOLVED ISSUES

The executed Letter of Intent lists the considerations listed below for further discussion in Phase II.

- Funding for the CTA Blue Line and I-290 should be sought for both improvements as if they were one project
- Expanded bridges (decks) at Oak Park Avenue, East Avenue, Ridgeland Avenue, and Lombard Avenue at Village cost
- CSX right-of-way and proposed bridge profiles
- Construction staffing, staging and effects
- Grant opportunities to defray local costs
- Hardscape, landscape, aesthetics and sustainability features

There are several reasons to resolve some issues in the future. Technology for vehicles, pricing High Occupancy Toll lanes, and communication are changing rapidly. Ongoing research on congestion pricing, demand management, travel behavior, and related subjects will add new insights. Funding sources are uncertain. IDOT says their Traffic Surveillance Building on Harrison is antiquated, but has not made a decision about the future of this building. IDOT's Staging Plan is conceptual, so they will update it as part of the Phase 2 Construction Drawings and Specifications. IDOT is using the Infrastructure Voluntary Evaluation Sustainability Tool (INVEST), which should provide more insights about the effectiveness of sustainability features.

The Village is considering decks along the Corridor. IDOT is willing to build the decks provided the Village pays for them. The Village is talking to the Oak Park River Forest High School and the Park District of Oak Park about possible collaboration.

IDOT anticipates a Public Hearing on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement in late January 2017. The CTA will release their report at the same time. The Village Board needs to make decisions about Village-specific issues.