

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON THE ROUTE 53/120 PROJECT

What is the Illinois Route 53/120 project?

This project involves the possible construction of a new highway between the terminus of Illinois Route 53 at Lake Cook Road and a new Illinois Route 120 bypass running parallel to and south of existing Route 120.

Why is this project being studied at this time?

The Route 53/120 project was ranked highest among all priority transportation projects in its effect on region-wide congestion, by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) in the Go To 2040 Regional Comprehensive Plan.

Who has initiated the study process?

The Illinois State Toll Highway Authority (“Tollway”) is leading the study process.

Where is the study process at now?

The Tollway created the Blue Ribbon Advisory Council (BRAC) in 2011. The BRAC included local elected officials, transportation and planning agencies, and business and labor representatives. The BRAC was formed to determine if a broad BRAC consensus could be developed on whether the Route 53/120 project should go forward. The BRAC, after months of investigations and deliberations, recommended that this project go forward and provided a blueprint for the project including design and environmental requirements.

The Tollway Board of Directors reviewed the BRAC recommendations and agreed to continue the study process. The tollway then formed two committees, as recommended by BRAC, to study the financial feasibility of the project (the Finance Committee) and to explore land planning for the roadway corridor (the Land Use Committee). Both committees have finished their work and made reports to the Tollway.

What did the BRAC recommend?

The BRAC recommended the construction of a road in central Lake County. This recommendation is conditioned on the Tollway adhering to design principles, road alignments, environmental commitments, and other recommendations included in the BRAC report to the Tollway.

Some specific design parameters include:

- A four lane limited access boulevard with a 45 mph speed limit.
- Below grade portions of the road.
- Earthen berming on some sections of the road.
- Water quality treatment features to protect ground water.
- Specific design and operating standards.

The BRAC report has specific road performance standards to protect the environment including reduced stormwater runoff, water quality standards, protecting/enhancing streams, use of alternative road deicing approaches, improving air quality, reducing travel times, maintaining speeds on existing local roads, and minimizing traffic noise.

The BRAC also recommended a robust land preservation effort as part of the project including open space protection and restoration and the creation of an Environmental Restoration Stewardship Fund to provide financial resources for the conservation program.

Click [here](#) to read the full BRAC report.

How much will the project cost?

Based on a Tollway analysis the project is estimated to cost between \$2.3 billion and \$2.65 billion (2020 dollars).

Who pays for projects like this?

Recently when new roads are added to the Tollway system these projects have been paid for by revenues generated from tolls on the overall Tollway system combined with local contributions from the area where the new road is to be built.

How would the Route 53/120 project be paid for?

No final decisions have been made about how to pay for the project. The Finance Committee formed by the Tollway to study the financial feasibility of the project has made recommendations on options to pay for the construction. These include (with their estimated financial contributions):

Tollway System Contributions: System-wide toll revenues (\$1.36 to \$1.91 billion)

Innovative Tolling Strategies: Indexing tolls for inflation and congestion pricing where tolls are higher at peak travel times for on the proposed road. Also restructuring tolls along I-94 in Lake County to make them equal to the tolls charged in other parts of the toll system (\$380 million - \$510 million in 2020 bonding capacity).

County Motor Fuel Tax: Cook, DuPage, Kane and McHenry Counties currently levy a motor fuel tax. Lake County does not levy a motor fuel tax. 50% of revenues from this tax would go to the Route 53/120 project and 50% would go to priority road projects in Lake County (\$34 million – \$45 million in 2020 bonding capacity).

Value Capture: Studies completed for the Land Use Committee predict that the new road will increase the likelihood of business growth in the road corridor. This finance option would collect 25% of the increase in real estate tax revenue from new non-residential tax base on land close to the road. All other real estate taxes generated by the new development would go to the applicable school and other districts. This revenue would be directed to the Environmental Restoration and Stewardship Fund recommended by the BRAC for conservation projects in Lake County. Since the road is projected to increase the amount of business growth in the corridor beyond what would likely happen without the road, it is estimated that schools and other districts will receive greater

dollars even though a portion of the new revenue will be used for conservation activities (\$81 million - \$108 million/2020 dollars in net present value).

Please note that these recommendations are options. Other options could be considered.

Why do we have to pay for part of this road?

Recent new toll roads are paid for by a combination of toll system-wide revenues and contributions from the area where the road is to be built. Secondly, the special BRAC design and environmental standards will cost additional dollars above the typical toll road designs. It has been suggested that these special Lake County design and environmental standards should be paid for by Lake County.

Will the project increase my property taxes?

No. The road project would not be funded with property taxes.

The road could help hold down homeowner property taxes. An analysis completed for the Land Use Committee projects increased likelihood for business development if the road is built. This extra tax base would provide additional non-homeowner tax revenues for area school districts in the corridor and nearby. Since Grayslake has already designated 1,300 acres of land along Peterson Road for office, retail and light manufacturing growth, when built, the new non-residential projects could help hold down local homeowner property taxes.

Are there design elements that could apply to Grayslake?

Yes. The Village interacted with the BRAC process and was the only community to proactively propose design concepts for the road. In Grayslake the concepts include a below grade roadway for the east-west portion of the project including the interchange located between Alleghany Road and Route 83. The below grade portions avoid elevated roads and bridges thereby helping to minimize impacts on existing neighborhoods adjoining the road. You can view Grayslake's vision for a low profile Route 53/120 which contains these design concepts here: [Grayslake Low Profile Vision](#)

The BRAC report includes specific guidelines for the Grayslake Route 120 bypass portion of the project including:

- Alignment to rejoin Route 120 is in accordance with Alternative 3E or 6E of the Route 120 / Central Lake Thruway Unified Vision to minimize wetland impacts.
- Minimize aerosol, ground and surface water contamination through a) reduced road footprint and meandering the roadway, b) depressing road surface and c) asymmetric berming above grade areas along the road to reduce aerosol dispersal of salt and other contaminants.
- Reduce, capture, and cleanse contaminated stormwater so they do not impact agricultural lands.
- Move the road within the right-of-way farthest away from sensitive lands and legally protected nature preserves to avoid direct and indirect impacts.
- Minimize direct runoff and subsurface flows toward to farmland, protected areas, and nature preserves.

- Reduce noise impacts with depression of the road and berming.
- Minimize visual intrusion of the road.
- Minimize to the greatest extent possible cut-through traffic in the Liberty Prairie Reserve by closing any connection or providing only a right-in-right-out on the Almond Road south.

Where would the proposed road be in Grayslake?

Primarily, the Route 53/120 project runs east to west through Grayslake carrying regional traffic through the community on the new road versus the current overcrowded Route 120. The alignment has the road south of existing Route 120. Generally, the below grade project would connect to existing Route 120 east of Grayslake, continue under Route 45 pass to the south of Northwestern Lake Forest Hospital, and proceed under Routes 83 and 137 and nearby railroad tracks. The road would continue below grade west of Route 83 past Alleghany Road and connect with a four lane Route 120 west of Hainesville. This link provides a general depiction of the alignment.

Will there be easy access to the new road in our area?

Preliminary concepts include access points on Peterson Road east of Route 83, Alleghany Road, and on Route 45 south of Route 120.

What are the next steps in the process?

The Tollway Board of Directors considered the information provided by the Finance Committee and Land Use Committee and made the decision to authorize a full environmental analysis to comprehensively examine issues of road alignment, design, project impacts, and mitigation. Now that this step is taken there will be extensive opportunities for further public input throughout the process.

When could the road be built?

There is no way now to determine at this time when the road would be built. The financial analysis completed thus far utilizes 2020 construction cost estimates.

What is Grayslake's role in the process?

Since the proposed road alignment puts a portion of any Route 53/120 project in Grayslake, the Village has, on a continuous basis, monitored the work of the BRAC and the work of the various study committees. Grayslake area residents former Mayor Pat Carey and George Ranney have participated in the various working groups established to study the road financing and land use. The Village proactively interacted with the BRAC process by providing design concepts for the roadway that take into account Grayslake-specific conditions. As requested by the Tollway the Village has participated in the discussions of both the Finance Committee and the Land Use Committee. The Village will continue to actively monitor the process as it continues.

How can I follow the study process?

Go to www.illinoistollway.com for updates on the Tollway process.