

**Chicago Transit Authority Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study
Public Meeting 10/7 & 10/8 2013 and Open Comment Period through 11/7/2013**

Addendum of Public Comments

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Comment # 10:

Date: 11/05/13

Pete Harmet, IDOT: pete.harmet@illinois.gov

Mark Peterson, IDOT: mark.peterson@illinois.gov

Dear Sirs:

I am reaching out to you today out of deep concern over the proposed construction plans for the I-290 Corridor. I am an occasional user of the highway as well as a neighbor, so while I am interested in a potentially improved commute, I do not believe the proposed solutions provide a suitable return. My primary concerns are as follows:

1. **RAMPS TOO HIGH:** The current IDOT plans make the statement of “staying within the ditch” which I believe is misleading. The new ramps stay within the width of the ditch, but rise above the vertical walls, severely altering the impact on our community. Both sound and air pollution as well as community cohesiveness will deteriorate. This betrays the original commitment of IDOT years back to mitigate negative impact on the Oak Park community. Currently there is a significant increase in highway traffic noise in the neighborhoods closest to the ramps at Harlem and Austin. Extending the length of the raised ramps will severely exacerbate the problem. The negative impact on our property values will degrade the quality of this community, encourage more suburban sprawl eventually leading to more traffic. For the ramps to move to the right, then the ditch needs to be deepened to accommodate truly staying “IN” the ditch.
2. **LACK OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STUDIES:** The first 2 rounds of decision making on the highway have been done without any environmental studies. Specifically, IDOT has not considered environmental, economic, financial, and social criteria yet and has already eliminated 6 alternatives and center ramps. There has also not been any analysis presented as to how long it will take for these changes to “pay back” the traffic interruptions, which will occur during the proposed 3 years of construction — what is the ROI on overall traffic impact? A 1999 American Lung Association report ranked Oak Park 6th among suburban municipalities with the most people living in “Dirty Diesel Hot Spots.” Increasing traffic through an already strongly impacted community does not make sense.
3. **TRUCK TRAFFIC:** A major driver for IDOT is to create a “freightway” for greater trucking traffic. This has not been shared broadly by IDOT and the future noise and air pollution impact of this has not been studied. This is a commuter highway and combining these purposes will eliminate the traffic time savings and degrade highway safety. As a taxpayer, I am not in support of spending billions of dollars to increase truck-shipping traffic through our community.
4. **PEDESTRIAN SAFETY & CROSSWAYS:** We all know that the bridges at Harlem and Austin are extremely dangerous for pedestrians and this needs to be addressed in any solution. It is also important to our community, families and children that we do not lose the number of crossing points across the ditch. The pedestrian bridge at Home Avenue is an important element allowing our children to easily move across the community and these types of crossways must be included in the plans.
5. **CONFUSING INFORMATION ON PROJECTED TRAVEL TIME REDUCTIONS:** Past estimates projected rush-hour commuter time savings as less than a minute and current discussion is centered around hours

of “congestion.” The impact on commuters is not being clearly communicated and if commute times are only reduced by less than a minute, is it worth such a major reconfiguration for a highway that dead-ends into the Chicago Loop? While I am happy Senator Harmon, an Oak Park native, is involved with the Eisenhower issue, I have heard some concerns about the accuracy of numbers being shared by Senator Harmon at a recent meeting.

I urge you to consider other alternatives after executing full and proper Environmental Impact Studies. I also would hope that you would execute solutions that allow for future expansion of public mass transportation, especially the western extension of the CTA Blue Line.

Sincerely,

[Resident, Oak Park - CTA withholding personal information]

cc: CTA: bluweststudy@transitchicago.com

U.S. Congressman Danny Davis: <http://www.davis.house.gov>

State Senator Kimberly Lightford: <http://www.senatorlightford.com/>

State Representative La Shawn Ford: <http://www.lashawnkford.com/>

U.S. Senator Dick Durbin, www.durbin.senate.gov

U.S. Senator Mark Kirk, www.kirk.senate.gov

Governor Pat Quinn, <http://www.2.illinois.gov/gov/Pages/ContacttheGovernor.aspx>

Rob Cole, Village of Oak Park: Cole@oak-park.us

Comment # 15:

I am a resident of Forest Park living on Adams and Harlem and occasionally take the Blue Line into the city for work depending on my final destination. My determination for taking the Blue Line vs. I290 is typically time related when my destination has access to public transit. Below are my comments of your blue line study from the little bit of info that was available at the PMSA open house.

- Walking accessibility to the Blue Line Harlem stop should be the highest priority for the station and surrounding bridge and community renovations associated with this study as the sidewalks on Harlem are too narrow and dangerous, along with dangerous crossings at on/off ramps.
- CTA needs to fight IDOT on behalf of pedestrians to provide excellent pedestrian access as all IDOT cares about is vehicle through put.
- Bike accessibility to the Blue Line Harlem stop should be the second highest priority and CTA should support bike routes on adjacent streets to Harlem and provide bike storage areas in secure locations insight of CTA personnel.
- Bus accessibility to the Blue Line Harlem stop should be the third priority (behind pedestrian, and biking) need safe boarding locations separated from Harlem thru traffic and would suggest a second head house on North bound Harlem for unloading passengers as this is the direction most bus passengers will arrive from as the Green Line to the north siphons off bus rider ship from the North.
- CTA needs to work with Pace to provide more frequent connecting bus service as 20 to 30 minute intervals for buses during rush hour is appalling, this I think would help with increasing ridership from Berwyn, North Riverside, Riverside, etc.
- I believe that the best station design for Harlem would be a modified version of the compact design with two head houses at Harlem Ave while shifting the platform in the compact design South to incorporate an auxiliary head house at Circle Ave with a ramp
- I would like to see wider platforms with less clutter and more weather and noise protection such as your artist rendering of the platform level enclosure enveloping the platform and tracks
- A plan needs to be developed between CTA, IDOT, and Forest Park for providing maintenance for pedestrian accessibility to the station for example during the winter no one clears the snow off the Harlem Ave sidewalks making it difficult for even able bodied individuals to walk to the station. I suggest giving the authority to Forest Park as they do a good job of keeping the community sidewalks cleared.
- When planning to renovate the tracks on the Blue Line CTA needs to make sure travel times to the loop are less than 20 minutes or you will not compete with I290 travel times. Travel times for me are the most important factor next to destination transit accessibility as a factor for deciding if I am going to use the Blue Line.

Comment # 17:

To whom it may concern:

While I was not able to attend the recent public meetings concerning plans to modernize the Blue Line Forest Park branch, held in conjunction with Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) meetings concerning the Eisenhower Expressway modernization, I have reviewed the recent presentation (http://www.transitchicago.com/assets/1/planning/CTA_Blue_Line_Boards_FINAL_100813.pdf) about CTA plans for the the Blue Line. I found the idea of the so-called "compact" station puzzling and wondered what is the reasoning behind such a proposal.

As presented, a "compact" station appears to have two entrances - one on each side of the cross street - while eliminating a secondary entrance at another street. Any doomsday scenario at street level makes such an option seem unwise, as the only exit from the platform would be blocked (what would the fire marshal say about that?). In the telephone industry, there is a practice of "diversity" - having multiple routes from one point to another, so if one route is cut the connection could be diverted to the other route with minimal loss of service. I am sure you can see the parallel in transit station exits.

I can only write about my experience with the East Avenue and Lombard Avenue stations (the secondary entrances to the Oak Park and Austin and stations, respectively). These are unmanned stations, with staircases leading down to track level followed by a short flight of steps back up to platform level. I see in the "Renovation" and "Wider Platform" proposals (page 6), these staircases are replaced by ramps to platform level, which I fully support. The optional pedestrian bridge between the two (as shown in the "Wider Platforms" diagram), would be nice, given that the two entrances for a single station are a quarter mile apart, though in my experience not entirely necessary.

However, in the "Compact" station proposal, these secondary entrances would be eliminated, as the platform is moved under the cross street for which the station is named. Eliminating these secondary entrances would increase the distance between station entrances from one half mile to one mile, adversely affecting the walkshed (page 4). There is already a gap in the medium blue walkshed between Lombard and East Avenues (centered on Ridgeland Avenue). One idea I have not seen proposed in the compact station scenario is adding a compact station at Ridgeland, which would mirror the stations along the Green Line and which would also keep station entrances half a mile apart (PACE runs bus service along Ridgeland as well, which could act as a feeder).

I do not have traffic numbers for users of the Lombard entrance, but I can tell you that people arrive there via walking, bicycle, and automobile (either driving and parking nearby or being dropped off). Furthermore, Lombard Avenue to the south (by Barrie Park) serves as a "cell phone lot" (as at airports) for people picking up transit passengers - drivers park there, wait for their passengers, then drive up to the station entrance to pick them up. It is difficult to impossible to do likewise at the Austin Boulevard station (wide streets, heavy traffic levels, bus traffic, no good place to pull over, and traffic lights for

expressway entrance/exit ramps). Even with the greatest redesign schemes IDOT could draw up, doing so at a compact station at Austin would still be extremely difficult.

The purpose of the Blue Line modernization study is to find ways of improving service to transit passengers. In my opinion, the compact station proposal as presented goes away from that goal. I can only think they were included to make the other proposals look that much better.

Thank you for reading,

P.S. - One minor point: on page 5 of the presentation, Oak Park station is not marked as having a "Street Easy to Cross (≤ 3 lanes)", but I think it should be marked as such (at the East Avenue entrance only).

Comment # 20

Attached is an Adobe PDF file with comments from [CTA withholding contact information] on the CTA's Blue Line Vision Study. Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments.

[CTA withholding contact information]

This letter is intended for inclusion in the Public Record

November 7, 2013
Chicago Transit Authority
Blue Line West Vision Study - ATTN: Ryan Mouw
567 W Lake Street
Chicago, IL 60661

SUBJECT: CTA Blue Line Vision Study

Dear Mr. Mouw:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the CTA Blue Line Vision Study.

Two Station Access Points are Better than One.

The CTA's Compact Layout Conceptual Design centers each station under a bridge with a single access point. Stations at Austin, Oak Park, and Harlem now have access at both ends. Eliminating access from Lombard, East, and Circle (in Forest Park) would increase trip times and hurt businesses on Lombard and Harrison (The Arts District). Oak Park's population density (greater than 11,000 people per square mile) works well with transit. We are fortunate to have good transit service provided by the CTA's Blue and Green Lines, as well as Metra's UP-W Line. Because the Corridor is multi-modal, joint planning and coordination are essential.

Every transportation mode (expressway, rail transit, buses, pedestrians, and bicyclists) plays a role. When each mode is designed to do what it does best, the transportation system works better and is efficient.

For IDOT, reconstructing and widening the expressway in the six-lane section is a priority. For the CTA, rebuilding the existing Forest Park Branch of the CTA is a priority; extending the Blue Line is not. Because of different priorities and funding programs, it is possible IDOT will improve the expressway years before a Blue Line extension occurs. Planning for transportation improvements and their impacts should account for different construction schedules. Corridor residents and businesses may not see the full benefits from multi-modal planning for years.

Major transportation investments create development opportunities.

Corridor communities have land that could be developed or redeveloped. Major transportation facilities such as the expressway, CTA Blue Line, and Metra commuter rail lines can promote development, shape desirable land use patterns, and allow higher density.

Do a Trends Analysis.

Trends change over time. Predicting the future is difficult. A Trends Analysis would help all of us understand how well (or poorly) Build Alternatives will work over time. IDOT used a Market-Based Population and Employment Forecast in contrast to the Scenario Based Forecast used by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) to prepare the Go to 2040 Plan. IDOT's Build Alternatives could undermine the CMAP Recommendations in the Go To 2040 Plan.

Some demographic and technology trends are:

- ☒ Changes in trip generation rates
- ☒ Collision avoidance technology in new vehicles
- ☒ Baby Boomers retiring and driving less
- ☒ Reduction in Vehicle Miles of Travel
- ☒ Recent college graduates who are avoiding purchasing a car to pay down college debt
- ☒ Increasing fuel cost
- ☒ Growth in transit ridership, walking, bicycling
- ☒ More single driver trips
- ☒ Better parking management
- ☒ Growth in social media and networks
- ☒ Innovative car, taxi, and bicycle sharing using social networks
- ☒ Real time information
- ☒ Variable managed lane and parking pricing policies
- ☒ Changes in goods movement technologies

Do Scenario Planning.

Scenario Planning is intended to make long-term plans flexible by considering alternative futures, the consequences of each future, and how to respond to different futures. Based on the modeling analysis, IDOT believes that Build Alternatives with High Capacity Transit will work better than Build Alternatives without High Capacity Transit. So do we.

Consider Creative Funding Opportunities.

At the Town Hall Meeting hosted by State Senator Don Harmon on October 29, 2013, both IDOT Secretary Ann Schneider and CTA Vice President for Planning and Federal Affairs Michael McLaughlin spoke of the need for creative funding. Some ideas to consider are Value Capture whereby the CTA would capture some of the added value accrued to adjacent development by having a nearby CTA station. Another idea is to reduce the fare on the Forest Park Branch because its ridership is lower than the O'Hare Branch of the Blue Line.

The chart below shows the Average Weekday Ridership by month for the Year 2012. Ideally, the O'Hare Branch and the Forest Park Branch would have roughly equal ridership. Looking at the chart, it is clear they do not. For every one rider on the Forest Park Branch, there are about 2.5 riders on the O'Hare Branch. This means the O'Hare Branch dictates how often the CTA runs trains and how many cars are in each train. Empty seats do not generate revenue for the CTA. The airlines and the hotels have learned how to set fares or room rates to fill empty seats or hotel rooms. The CTA discounted fares for riders on the Dan Ryan Red Line when they had to find alternative ways to travel during reconstruction.

[Chart displaying average weekday ridership on Blue Line Forest Park and O'Hare Branches in 2012, where average daily ridership on Forest Park Branch is 30,438 on weekdays and average daily ridership on O'hare Branch is 74,957 on weekdays.]

We are pleased the CTA is working with IDOT on the Corridor. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. Please feel free to contact me at [CTA withholding personal contact information] with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

[CTA withholding personal contact information]

COPY TO: U.S. Federal Highway Administration – Illinois Division Office
U. S. Federal Transit Administration
Illinois Department of Transportation

Comment # 24

[CTA withholding personal contact information]

November 6, 2013

Mr. Pete Harmet, Bureau Chief of Programming
Mr. Mark Peterson, IDOT Project Manager
Illinois Department of Transportation
Bureau of Programming
201 W. Center Ct.
Schaumburg, IL 60196

Dear Mr. Harmet and Mr. Peterson:

Thank you for the continued opportunity to provide input as IDOT moves into Round 3 of the Eisenhower Expressway – Phase I study. This letter will be copied to the CTA as it will focus on the transit-related aspects for increased intermodal use of this transportation corridor through 2040 and beyond.

Better Options

In regards to the Eisenhower Expressway study, IDOT is required to evaluate all the possible options that will contribute to addressing the purpose and needs stated in the Environmental Impact Statement. IDOT has done a thorough quantitative review of 12 combinations, but it is apparent that a full alternative examination is yet to be complete.

Using regional impacts as the measure, IDOT has brought forward in the Public Meeting No. 3 four alternatives that provide little significant changes to the region's traffic congestion and result in a reduced the number of transit ridership. The opposite results are what is desired by Stakeholders - that being greater reductions in traffic congestion and providing improvements in numbers of transit riders.

What is yet to be studied jointly by IDOT, RTA, Metra, and the CTA is one or more multi-mode alternatives that induce transit ridership and reduce the number of vehicles rather than adding capacity more vehicle within the central portion of Eisenhower. An alternative approach the reduces vehicles results in a better use of energy resources, reduces roadway congestion, decreases noise and air pollution levels, and improves pedestrian and vehicle safety.

Not Evaluated – Complete I-290 Express Transit to Loop

In response to IDOT bypassing the need to look at all transportation improvements, a standing internet-based petition to IDOT of citizen stakeholders (supporters names included herein – *Exhibit "A"*) from Chicago and over 10 other municipalities request that Eisenhower Expressway transportation planners endeavor to prepare an equitable analysis and travel simulation on a 'true' Express Transit service. This frequent and short duration Express transit will be serving those accessing the expressway from DuPage and the western feeder expressways of I-88, I-290, and I-294. The difference of a 'true' Express Service compared to the currently modeled Feeder-Express bus with train service is primarily the overall travel times and the perceived level of convenience to prospective riders. The fact that IDOT's proposed Round 3 alternatives do not show any measurable increase in transit ridership is an indication that an attractive transit alternative for western-origin expressway travelers has not yet been considered at this

time. Although IDOT has indicated (in the August 15, 2013 letter) that in “the next evaluation round, refinements will be made with the goal of improving transit performance for the remaining alternatives”, they are not acknowledging that a “true” transit express alternative is a better performer than any robust feeder service.

Therefore, the petition requests for IDOT to examine an integrated ‘Park-N-Ride’ express transit service that would provide a direct west I-290 corridor-to/from Chicago Loop transit service. Given this mode has been mentioned in prior Public Meetings and Citizens’ Advisory Group comments, this letter will provide explicit illustrations to demonstrate the potential of uninterrupted Express Transit to solve the Eisenhower corridor’s present and 2040 challenges. The uninterrupted Express Transit approach must not be diluted with the less-effective Feeder Express (BRT) and Blue Line pairing currently proposed. Such uninterrupted Express Transit service would be quicker than typical rush-hour vehicle travel times – and provide west corridor commuters a viable option (as identified by a 2010 Chicago Tribune poll.) With express rapid transit, the result will be fewer vehicles and thereby less congestion on I-290.

The approach to increase the transit market corresponds with the Metropolitan Council 2030 Transportation Policy Plan calling for regional transit capital to be invested to "expand the local and express bus system and develop a network of rail and bus transitways to meet the 2030 goal of DOUBLING TRANSIT RIDERSHIP and the 2020 goal of a 50% ridership increase."

[Untitled map of Chicagoland with box around study area from Mannheim Road in the west to Racine Avenue in the east, Madison Road to the north and Roosevelt Road on the south. Green overlay covering map and extending just west of the DuPage County border, orange overlay extending into Kane County.]

IDOT has publicized their observation that the region is already abundantly served by transit, stating: “Overall, there is an abundance of existing transit options in the study area, with 21% of the work trips using transit compared to 12% regionally. However, the **market served by I-290 (area shown in orange) is much broader than the market served by transit (area shown in green)** and, as such, the stand alone transit improvements that [IDOT] have studied, including a Blue Line extension to Oak Brook, have not demonstrated significant increased transit ridership or would not address the mobility issues along I-290 in any meaningful way. Further, as a result of the current variety and extent of transit options in the study area, our studies have shown that about 50% of the ridership on any new transit service is coming from other existing transit services.” <http://eisenhowerexpressway.com/faqs/>

The notion that RTA and CTA can not attract those currently in the orange-colored regions heading toward downtown Chicago via the Eisenhower Expressway must be challenged by examining what [sic] are the weaknesses of transit from attracting this market. To do so, the thought is to examine means of greatly improving travel times to encourage current vehicle drivers to park their cars and take transit for their rush-hour commutes. Secondly, planners must examine access convenience from the expressway and perceptions of security.

One individual named ‘Russ’, made an on-line comment on June 21 that reflects a likely sentiment that the transit authorities must respond quickly to in this planning endeavor. He stated, “*Green Line (CTA) would see a massive influx of riders if it ran express from Austin to the new Morgan stop during rush hour. I don’t take the train much because it isn’t much of a difference time wise for me to drive to the*

*loop and ... only \$10 (early hours) to park in a garage. However, I'd take the El more frequently if it were more of a pleasant ride through the (Chicago) west side." Another former Blue Line rider replied "...if CTA wants riders, money should be spent on personnel or **security to patrol the [rail] cars**. I originally located near the Blue Line specifically so I could commute on it."*

It is important to reiterate that this Express service must be configured to be independent of existing Metra, Pace, and CTA services that serve the local transit markets. A good analogy might be the Illinois Tollway Authorities' Oasis locations which serve from 25,000 to 30,000 persons per day, with little who actually live in the local vicinity of the Oasis facility.

Figure 1 – Proposed point-to-point (P –to –P) uninterrupted Express HCT or PRT service from Park-&-Ride facilities.

[A map titled Figure 1 showing downtown Chicago to DuPage County with a red line, labeled 'Express HCT' in legend, showing an express service running from approximately Hillside Park and Ride Center to approximately the Circle Interchange in downtown Chicago. Dotted red line, labeled 'Future HCT' in legend, shows an extension of red line described above to a destination on I-88 approximately between Oak Brook Mall and Yorktown Shopping Center. An alternate green line on the map extends from the Berkeley Metra Station to connect with the red line at the Forest Park Blue Line Station. There is a text box near the bottom of the map stating "Note: this Round 1 suggestion for single mode resolution to reduce vehicles and congestion is yet to be studied."]

Demonstration of Express Transit Mode

Figure 1 demonstrates an **uninterrupted Express High-Capacity Transit** (or alternatively an Express Personal Rail Transit) that is intentionally independent of Blue-Line connections. The Express service is targeted at the DuPage travelers (in the orange area of the [above, untitled] map) who would benefit from parking there [sic] vehicles in an amenity-rich Park-N-Ride facility and commute the final 18 miles express to downtown Chicago in less time, reduced parking costs, and reduced exposure to vehicle accidents. The Park-N-Ride would be fed by east-bound drivers from I-290, I-294, and I-290 with some additional highway feeds off Mannheim Road just to the east. This service would not be conveniently accessible to those better served by the existing (or extended) CTA Blue, Green, or Pink Lines. The goal is to utilize existing rail easements wherever possible, or consider rubber wheeled HCT or PRT.

One alternative location for the Park-&-Ride facility (although perhaps not as successful) would be an Express HCT station at an expanded Berkeley Metra location with new dedicated exit ramps from nearby I-290 and I-294. This line could split off to the currently unused CSX rail once it reached River Forest. This approach may not perform as well, but perhaps would reduce the initial investment in creating rail easements between Hillside and current Forest Park rail along the Eisenhower.

Comparison of Travel Times

Figure 2 demonstrates the significance of having the Park-and-Ride facility at a western-most Hillside location versus a facility in Forest Park or somewhere in between. Secondly it demonstrates how important it is that the Express be uninterrupted by local-service stops.

Figure 2 - Multi-modal travel option durations in Eisenhower Corridor

[Table titled Figure 2 describes ‘Vehicle, Existing Transit and Express HCT Comparison’ with Travel Distances to Congress and State Street, Travel Duration (Minutes) Based on Average Speed, and Travel and Transfer Duration provided for 5 park and ride alternatives along the Eisenhower Expressway. Table details are included in public comment submittal letter text below.]

The rows within Figure 2 list five alternative Park-and-Ride locations – all immediately adjacent to the Expressway, including: Kingery Highway, Wolf Road Tri-Interstate, Mannheim, 25th Avenue, and an expanded DesPlaines Road location. With each, the distance in miles is provided from these locations to the Loop (Congress and State Street).

1. Utilizing existing Pace bus with CTA Blue Line, the fourth column (green lettering) indicates the approximate duration to make a trip from the proposed Park and Ride location to the Loop location. It ranges from 25 minutes to/from DesPlaines Road and as long as 70 minutes to/from Kingery Highway.
2. The next four rows indicate vehicle expressway travel times for the same origin/destinations at various speeds ranging from 20 mph (moderate congestion) to 55 mph (no congestion.) Within this comparison are three findings:
 - a. Within the **orange boxes** are new opportunities for transit to be more attractive to drivers than completing their trip in their vehicles. [At congested speeds of 20 and 28 mph, Orange Boxes mark Park and Ride locations at Kingery Hwy, Wolf Road, Mannheim, and 25th]
 - b. Within the **green box** is the one instance where existing transit park and ride location would result in competitive travel times compared to driving. [At congested speeds of 20 mph, the Green box marks the Park and Ride location at Des Plaines.]
 - c. The **blue-toned** fields are instances where vehicle travel times are of a shorter duration than transit service from Park-and-Ride locations. [At highway speeds of 28, 35 and 55 mph, all alternatives which are not marked in an Orange or Green box are blue-toned, including from Kingery Hwy at 35 and 55mph, from Wolf Road at 35 and 55 mph, from Mannheim at 35 and 55 mph, from 25th at 35 and 55 mph, and from Des Plaines at 28, 35, and 55 mph.]
3. The last two columns examine the overall travel time impact relative to the proposed Park-N-Ride Express HCT facility along the expressway. This considers a common vehicle origin point of the tri-interstate intersection.

The results are no surprise.

- a. The general findings demonstrate that the further east the Park-and-Ride facility is located, the less attractive it will be to divert vehicle drivers to use transit service.
- b. As high-lighted within a **yellow box**, only the Wolf Road location provides Express transit travel duration advantage over the congested (at approximately 30mph) vehicle trips.
- c. Express transit service starting from Forest Park is not effective as the existing Blue Line service.
- d. Conclusion – with or without an extension to the Blue Line, an Express transit service is a clear candidate to divert western-based travel origins to transit from vehicles, something the Blue Line Extension with robust express feeder bus service does not appear to be effective.

Performance Design Criteria

In order to be modeled effectively, it is critical that any proposed Park-and-Ride facility is designed with the following:

- ease of access and visible from the expressway;
- sufficient number of parking spaces;

- digital signage along the expressway that displays parking locations and space availability, as well as the travel time comparisons between vehicle and express transit;
- ease of access to the Express transit station from vehicle parked locations; and
- Minimal wait times (less than 10 minutes) between departing Express trains within weather-protected stations.

The message being conveyed is that without looking at these types of integrated intermodal approaches, it is easy to dismiss the idea that transit can be an influence in reducing vehicles and reducing Expressway congestion. Auto diversions to Park-and-Ride during peak periods will be very unlikely if

- o the driver has already invested 15 minutes in congested traffic,
- o the driver is not sure if a Park-N-Ride facility will have convenient and available parking,
- o the driver knows that staying in their vehicle might be another 30 minutes in the car and 25 minutes if they switched to the Blue Line.

On the contrary, if an I-88 east-bound driver is alerted during rush-hour with a real time digital sign that describes the following scenario:

- **VEHICLE CONGESTION AHEAD** -
- 43 MINUTE DRIVE TO I-90/94** -
- **or use Wolf Road Park-N-Ride** -
- 29 MINUTE EXPRESS RAIL TO LOOP** -
- **212 PARKING SPACES AVAILABLE** -
- **TRAINS DEPARTING EVERY 5 MINUTES** -

It is easy to see there is a clear advantage in promoting transit alternatives that are convenient and do not increase overall travel times. If IDOT models on the Express BRT with Blue Line Extension model these types of benefits for commuters, it is astonishing the models do not reflect an increase in auto diversions to transit.

Critique of Express Transit Alternative

Travel planners may also question if there may be a demand for Express Service beyond peak rush hour periods? I would suggest that sustained interest would prevail based on the following:

- o There are growing generations that are absorbed in an information technology culture. Texting and checking email during driving is a serious expressway safety concern. Express transit allows this culture to reach their destinations without losing [sic] the connectivity they have grown dependent to;
- o IDOT should continue to enforce (variable-rate) tolled lanes to balance the costs of maintaining roadways and treat fairly those who choose to take transit service. In other words, why impose monetary penalties on those using mass transit while vehicles use expressways without a cost premium?
- o The 2040 cost of energy will inevitably be a higher cost percentage within the household income – with a barrel of oil projected to be in the \$165 to \$220 range. Already DuPage area residents have been polled to indicate they do not have adequate transit alternatives;
- o The 2040 generation has a different attitude about their right to use resources than today's generation. The Eisenhower plans must be ready to reflect that shift or it will be obsolete shortly after completion;
- o With an average of 5 to 6 vehicle accident per day on the Eisenhower, transit is the safe approach;

o During non-peak hours, the frequency of intervals may be maintained by running smaller capacity transit or Personal Rapid Transit (PRT) people-movers. The Express route should not be bound to HCT only.

[Untitled map of western Chicagoland area stating 'Select link analysis, 2040 Home to Work Trips using I-290 EB' with Orange overlay demonstrating origins of passengers on I-290.]

The Equity of Toll Fares

Regarding the **tolls** suggested for expressway roads, transportation planners frequently indicate the arterial congestion is caused by a diversion of traffic for tolled lanes. This may be true if there are toll fares collected along all entrance points to the expressway, but this should not be the case if a toll is collected only at the point where the Park-and-Ride option is provided. Tolls starting at Wolf Road would be much less likely to divert drivers to arterial roads compared to tolls at Austin. In other words, it is unlikely for a driver to divert before Wolf Road and take Roosevelt Road, for example, in order to avoid a toll but double their travel time. Those within IDOT's I-290 2040 market area (largely from DuPage and growing in Kane County) will have a choice to either continue in their vehicle for a one-time toll or pay the Park-and-Ride accommodations.

As one Oak Park Board of Trustee noted, Oak Park residents have nothing to gain from expanded expressway service. The number of lanes from Austin to downtown will remain as currently provided, so the congestion trends cannot change. It would be unreasonable to suggest that communities being affected by the environmental consequences of western region sprawl should also be asked to supplement those living lifestyles that are not environmentally responsible to future generations.

Urban sprawl caused by expressways is a real concern. Chicago Tribune's "Could Chicago Become Detroit" article dated July 21, 2013 showed the parallel increases and decreases in the two cities' populations. Both cities steadily increased population from 1900 to 1955 – in Chicago's case doubling from 1.7-million to 3.6million. After the expressways were introduced, both cities declined at parallel rates, Detroit losing over half of its population and Chicago falling to 2.7-million.

Keeping the Eisenhower within the 'Ditch'

We must applaud the Village of Oak Park for requesting to maintain the sovereign bounds of the communities that border the Eisenhower and IDOT's affirmative response to maintain the existing cross-section widths. To do so at the narrowest part of the expressway – Oak Park Avenue – is yet to be explained. This is where not waiving the benefits of express transit service comes into play. Either one of these must be true in order to maintain the width of the ditch at all locations:

1. Express Transit provides sufficient to handle Eisenhower corridor needs, thereby no need to add to the existing 3 lanes in either direction;
2. The CSX is willing to reduce the width of it's [sic] current two-rail easement;
3. The CTA relinquishes its current express rail easement.
4. The areas that go beyond the current expressway boundary are to be capped so that there are no perceived losses to Oak Park and Forest Park communities.

[Untitled photo of I-290 Eisenhower expressway and adjacent CTA tracks with arrow pointing to CTA right-of-way and text that says "Note: the location of the existing transit express rail easement shown in this image should *not* be compromised in order to contain roadways within the confines of the existing structural retaining walls."]

If IDOT proposes to convert existing transit easements within the existing multi-modal Eisenhower corridor into additional vehicle lanes – thereby negating planning efforts made at the inception of the Eisenhower to provide express transit service. The petition requires IDOT to maintain existing rail / transit easements - that may be utilized by express High-Capacity or Personal Rail Transit. The petition requests that IDOT analyze Express HCT and PRT service from Park-N-Ride facilities as a viable means of shifting to transit the larger market currently served by vehicles in the I-290 corridor.

Conclusion

As the Village of Oak Park Trustees had suggested at the conclusion of their September 30, 2013 presentation, we must recommend solutions when there are observed issues or deficiencies. This letter specifically requests that IDOT work with the RTA to enforce transit use and ridership as the means of reducing vehicles on the expressway. These reductions will address all the purpose and needs of the Purpose and Need statement, including:

- o Improving local and regional travel,
- o Improving modal connections and opportunities,
- o Improve safety for all, and
- o Improve access to employment.

Given I am an architect and not a transportation planner, I trust that these suggestions may be used more as an inspiration in developing a workable multimodal approach with the objective to increase transit ridership by at least 10% (a compromise to CMAP 2040 plan) and decrease congestion by reducing the attraction of vehicle for those who have a choice to drive or take transit.

Correspondingly, the RTA and CTA need to be confident that effective transit and increased ridership are indeed possible and must be achieved within the Expressway reconstruction plans. CTA's current visioning focuses on maintenance and modernization in lieu of what their key objective really should be – *to increase the demand and number of transit riders.*

Moreover, the CTA/RTA cannot increase the transit demand share if within the same multimodal corridor IDOT is looking at providing competing vehicle-based solutions such as HOV and HOT. Although IDOT has invited CTA to join them in the expansion of the Blue Line to the Mannheim, the CTA has made it clear this is not one of their business priorities. Conversely, CTA has almost given up on this branch of the Blue Line perceived as servicing limited areas of Oak Park, Forest Park, the Illinois Medical District, and UIC. The impact of transit is so much more.

Sincere regards,
[CTA withholding name]
Oak Park, Illinois

Exhibit "A": standing on-line petition from citizen stakeholders requesting IDOT to:

- a) maintain existing transit rail easements;
- b) analyze **Express High-Capacity Transit** and **Express Personal-Rapid Transit** service from visible and integrated Park-N-Ride facilities as a viable means of shifting to transit a larger market share currently served by vehicles within the I-290 corridor.

http://www.petitions24.com/the_eisenhower_expressway_environmental_impact_statement_eis_st

[Exhibit A includes an image, which is a series of several screen shots including names, city, and date of 41 citizens that have signed the on-line petition.]

[Additional attachments include copies of the Ratio Scoring results and summaries from IDOT's I-290 EIS Study project and Chapter 2: Policies and Strategies (pages 7-24) from the CMAP's Regional 2030 Transportation Policy Plan – Final November 2010.]