

Public Comments not read at November 4, 2020 Legislative Committee Meeting

Public Comment #22 received: November 3, 2020 at 1:42 p.m.

Name: Barbara Klipp.

Topic or Agenda Item Number: 7.3 & 7.4

Dear Committee and Board members,

We are submitting these comments to respectfully request that you support adding language to your FY 2021 Legislative Agenda to support Senator McConchie and Mary Edly Allen's bills to form a task force to determine what happens to the Rt. 53 corridor which has become a de facto open space corridor that supports many threatened and endangered species and delicate wetland ecosystems. Senators Bush and Morrison are chief co-sponsors of the senate bill as well.

Here's the bill synopsis:

"Creates the Illinois Route 53 Expansion Land Alternative Use Task Force to study the cost, feasibility, and environmental impact of alternative uses of the expansion land, including any potential impact on flooding in the area, the short and long term economic impact to the region, and all options for funding alternative uses."

The task force bill in the IL Senate is now IL SJR52 in the senate but not sure what it will be in the spring.

<https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/billstatus.asp?DocNum=52&GAID=15&GA=101&DocTypeID=SJR&LegID=122755&SessionID=108>

In the House, it is currently HJR10

<https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus.asp?DocTypeID=HJR&DocNum=110&GAID=15&SessionID=108&LegID=126339>

We also ask that you support the sunseting of the 1993 Illinois General Assembly authority for the Rt. 53 extension. This authority was given nearly 30 years and three studies ago. Millions of dollars and thousands of hours of planning time, including planning time in the Lake County Division of Transportation, have been wasted on a tollway project that was studied 4 times over a 50-year period and never brought to fruition. Requiring Illinois General Assembly approval for new Tollway projects is one of the only checks and balances you have to exert over the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority (ISTHA) and we believe it should be necessary for the ISTHA to need current approval from the General Assembly should they decide, at any time, to move forward with this project in Lake County for a 5th time. The current members (and candidates) of the Lake County delegation in the General Assembly were not even in the general assembly at the time this 17 year-old authority was granted.

Thank you for your consideration.

Public Comment #23 received: November 3, 2020 at 3:43 p.m.

Name: Stacy Meyers

Topic / Agenda Item #: 7.3 & 7.4

Dear Members of the Lake County Board:

Openlands respectfully requests that you move to add language to your FY 2021 Legislative Agenda to support proposed joint resolutions that mirror other resolutions currently sponsored by Senator McConchie and Representative Mary Edly Allen, which call for a task force to study the disposition of land within the Route 53 Extension corridor. Senator Melinda Bush and Senator Julie Morrison are Chief Co-Sponsors of the current Senate Joint Resolutions.

The purpose of the existing Senate Joint Resolution 52 and House Joint Resolution 10 are to:

"Create the Illinois Route 53 Expansion Land Alternative Use Task Force to study the cost, feasibility, and environmental impact of alternative uses of the expansion land, including any potential impact on flooding in the area, the short and long term economic impact to the region, and all options for funding alternative uses."

The corridor represents a regionally significant opportunity to connect communities and ecologically rich open space. Natural lands within the corridor, including high quality wetlands that support rare and protected species, are also a front-line defense against flooding and other effects of our changing climate. The corridor could be a public health and economic benefit for the people of Lake County.

We also request that you support sunseting the 1993 statute that initially authorized the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority to study the Route 53 extension project nearly 30 years ago. Since that time, the outdated authority has been recycled to conduct three studies, expending millions of dollars that were unforeseen at the time the law was enacted. Instead of issuing a perpetual blank check, it is important to maintain one of the only checks and balances the County has over any new incarnations of this project by the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority. The current members (and candidates) of the Lake County delegation in the General Assembly were not even in the General Assembly at the time this authority was originally granted.

Thank you, as always, for your ongoing support and consideration.

Kind regards,

Stacy Meyers

Public Comment #24 received: November 3, 2020 at 11:53 p.m.

Name: Evan Craig

Topic or Agenda Item Number: 7.3 & 7.4

Dear Committee and Board Members –

After fifty years and four separate studies, the Illinois Tollway Authority has once again determined that the people of Lake County do not wish to bear the severe environmental degradation or the heavy financial burden that would result from their expansion of their system with the extension of Rt. 53 north through Lake County, and Rt. 120 east from I-94 to the border near Richmond. While Lake County has benefitted from the open lands and wetlands in these corridors that have been spared by the NEPA requirement for Environmental Impact Studies, it has suffered from perpetual uncertainty that has split communities, delayed transportation improvements, preempted better planning and bloated road projects to prepare for its over-development impacts. So I respectfully request that you support bills in your 2021 Legislative Agenda offered by Senator McConchie and Representative Mary Edly Allen to form a task force to determine a future for the corridor that preserves the wildlife benefits while enabling better transportation planning.

Some of you might recall county initiatives to improve existing arterial roads in our lifetimes that were preempted by repeated attempts to force the 53/120 extension through our county, and hamstrung by the diversion of funding by IDOT. The Tollway spent \$50M on the most recent study, and the state legislature should take greater responsibility for this cost to tax- and toll-payers. I ask that you join us to put an end to these disruptive and recurring Rt. 53/120 tollway extension studies by asking the General Assembly to sunset its 1993 approval, and to require its renewed approval prior to initiating another study of them in the future.

Thank you for considering these actions.

Regards,
Evan Craig