

A summary of Responses to Comments submitted at the Senator Harmon Town hall meeting held on October 29, 2013.

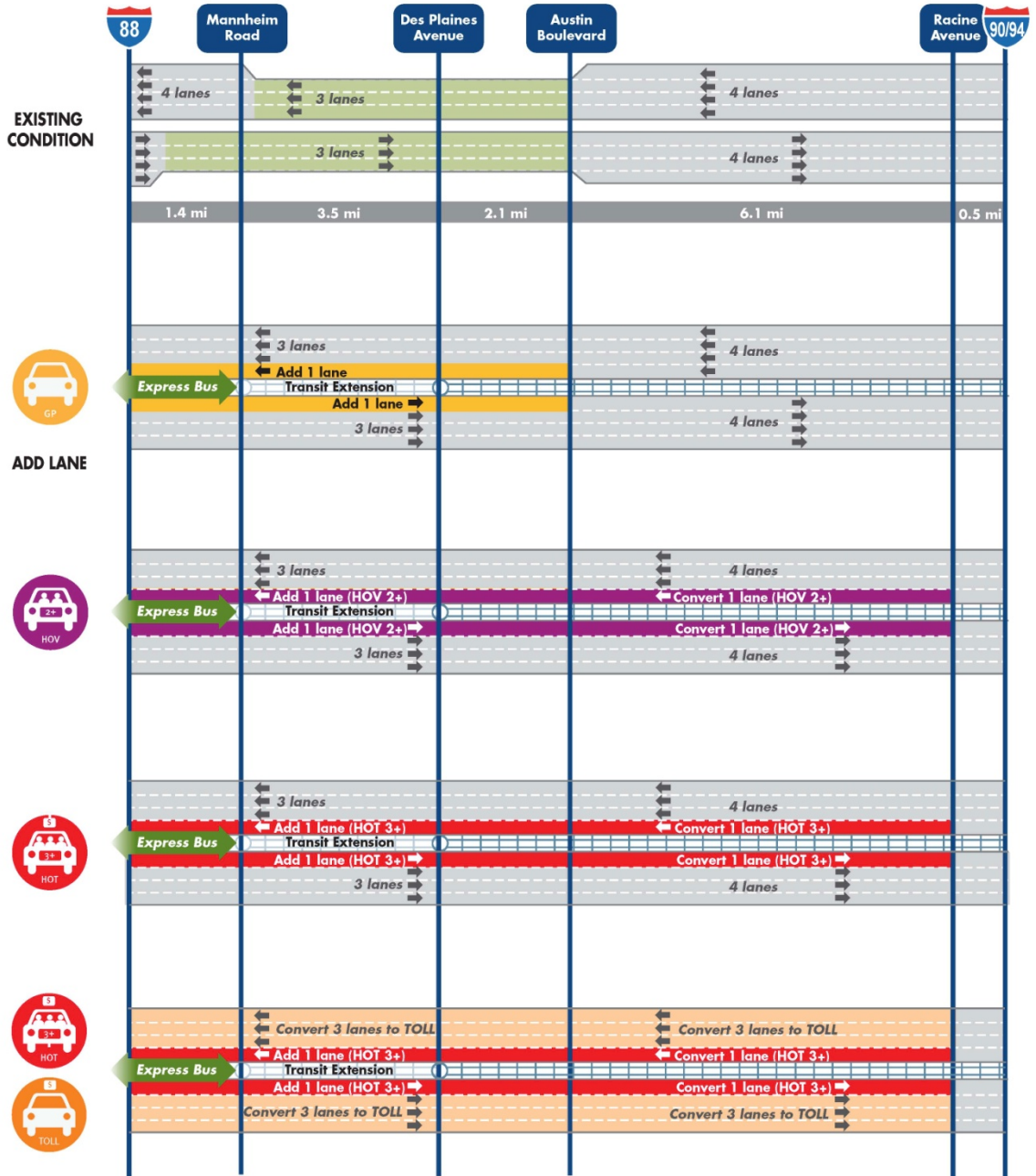
Comment: If arterial streets need to be reconstructed based on changes to the Ike, who is responsible to pay for those changes?

Response: With respect to cross street improvements, the Department would be responsible for the construction work that is required as part of the overall I-290 project. For example, at Harlem Avenue, the reconstruction limits are approximately 600 feet north and south of I-290. Other items, such as sidewalks/bike paths, lighting, aesthetic features, and utilities, may have a local cost component, depending upon the final scope of improvements. Local agency maintenance of certain project elements may also be required. It is also important to note that beyond what may be covered in the overall project cost, as appropriate, there are a number of other potential fund sources, including the your local Council of Mayors, the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program (CMAQ), the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP). Further information about the CMAQ and TAP programs can be found at www.cmap.illinois.gov, and at <http://www.dot.il.gov/opp/faq.html> for information about the ITEP program.

In the coming months we will be working with stakeholders to refine the scope of the I-290 corridor improvements, advance the aesthetics discussion, and develop cost estimates. This will give the Department and stakeholders more information regarding any potential cost sharing.

Comment: Give a brief description of the various proposals. Who makes the final decision? How much input actually comes from the Oak Park population? Which proposal do you favor and why?

Response: In general, the I-290 alternatives evaluation process involves a continuous cycle of analysis, review, and refinement. The process is ongoing, with additional engineering and environmental detail, as well as other evaluation factors considered as the process advances. As such, final decisions have not been made, and further changes may be made to the alternatives as technical studies and stakeholder/agency coordination advances. Thus far, there has been a very comprehensive analysis and discussion of transit, highway and bicycle/pedestrian improvements, as well as a variety of management strategies such as tolling and carpooling, at a conceptual level of detail. The upcoming round of evaluation (round #3) will include additional engineering and environmental detail, as well as continued stakeholder outreach. The round #3 evaluation includes 4 build alternatives along with the no-build alternative. All 4 of the remaining build alternatives include an additional travel lane in each direction from Mannheim Road to Austin Boulevard and an extension of the Blue Line from its current terminus in Forest Park to Mannheim Road in Hillside.



The final decision regarding the proposed improvement will be made by the Department and the Federal Highway Administration, and will be based upon a combination of stakeholder input and technical studies. While there isn't a standard percentage or weight given to any one factor in the decision making process, the proposals developed thus far are very consistent with stakeholder comments in the Oak Park area. For example, the proposed improvements stay within the "ditch" section of I-290, and each alternative includes extensive transit improvements.

As part of the next round of alternatives evaluation, we will work with stakeholders to further define the scope and aesthetics associated with the remaining alternatives. In terms of a preferred plan, further technical studies must be conducted and additional stakeholder input will be sought prior to making that determination. In the coming months, we will discuss the next round of evaluation in a series of forums. Once the next evaluation round is complete, we will summarize the overall planning process in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and host a public hearing. After considering the public hearing comments, a Final EIS and Record of Decision will be prepared to document the preferred alternative.

Comment: If you add lanes to the Eisenhower, how many months will pass before congestion is the same as it is now? Do the greatest cities in the world have great highways to the suburbs or a great system of rail?

Response: In terms of the performance of an additional lane, our analysis is using a year 2040 planning horizon, and as such, the congestion relief information is for the year 2040. Based upon our round #2 analysis, travel times would be improved by up to 40% for managed lane users, and up to \$685,000 in daily productivity savings would be realized. It is also important to note that the I-290 corridor warrants complete reconstruction based upon facility condition, regardless of the current mobility concerns.

In terms of transit system coverage in the region, the Metra system plays a significant role in moving people between the City and suburban areas, with over 80 million rides served in 2013. Within the I-290 study area, there is an extensive transit system in place, with 21% of the work trips by transit, as compared to 12% for the region. In addition, the existing transit system is underutilized; as a example, the CTA Blue Line is operating at about 56% capacity. In addition, the travel markets for highway users are not the same, and therefore, improvements to one mode (i.e., transit) would not eliminate the need for improvements to other modes (i.e., highway). As noted above, the I-290 corridor requires complete reconstruction on the basis of facility condition alone.

At a project level, the I-290 planning process has been guided by a wide variety of stakeholders, including the experts from each of the regions transit agencies. The remaining alternatives reflect that input, with each alternative having extensive transit and bike/pedestrian components. Further, the CTA's Blue Line Vision study has been a great addition to an already robust discussion of transit, and we look forward to bringing the many discussions and technical analyses together into a preferred alternative at the conclusion of the planning process.

Comment: When will we move from the "POTENTIAL" of CTA/transit improvements, to the requirement that there must be equitable funding in both roads and transit before the Eisenhower Expressway is reconfigured/rebuilt?

Response: Broad goals, such as various strategies to encourage transit ridership, can help stimulate further discussions about important ideas. However, the conditions that exist in the I-290 corridor, as well as the fundamental principles that drive travel behavior and mode choice, represent a foundation that must be recognized and utilized when considering future improvements. An extension of the CTA Blue Line has been studied by multiple agencies, and the conclusion reached is that an extension would not address the transportation needs in the I-290 corridor. Additionally, it is important to note that the I-290 corridor warrants complete reconstruction on the basis of facility condition alone.

More generally, the Department has provided significant funding for transit improvements as part of past multi-year programs, and commitment continues with the current program, which includes approximately \$1.0 Billion for transit related improvements.

Comment: Thank you for your hard work on this. Please continue to advocate for the most environmentally friendly I-290 project. The ramps at Austin need to be low! We need a pedestrian friendly route to Austin Blue Line station. Also please keep this Bike Path and landscape idea – that would be well-utilized and detract from the negative aspects of the project.

Response: Stakeholders have voiced concerns about the possible elevation of the ramps, and the project team is evaluating drainage and developing a geometric layout, with the objective of keeping the ramps as low as possible. From a community perspective, the right side ramp design also has the potential to shield the mainline traffic, which is approximately 200,000 vehicles per day, from adjoining residential areas. The upcoming evaluation step (“round #3”) includes developing a detailed engineering layout for the four remaining alternatives. Environmentally, the current situation – gridlocked traffic idling on I-290 and cross streets, poses an air quality concern. Round #3 will also include air quality and traffic noise studies, which we will develop and discuss with stakeholders in the coming months. The I-290 alternatives will be analyzed to determine if they meet air quality standards that are set by the USEPA and are based upon protecting vulnerable populations, including children and the elderly. These technical studies, as well as stakeholder feedback will be considered in the development of the eventual design for the interchanges at Harlem Avenue and Austin Boulevard. Our goal is to develop a proposed plan that is an asset for each community.

The concepts developed to date have a number of bike and pedestrian enhancements, such as a continuous bike path from Columbus Park to the Prairie Path, wider sidewalks, improved access to CTA stations, pedestrian signal phases, additional pedestrian crossings, safety islands and improved lighting. In the upcoming round of alternatives evaluation, we will continue to discuss and refine these elements, as well as potential aesthetic treatments.

There are safety concerns associated with the current left side ramps at Harlem Avenue and Austin Boulevard, and based upon those concerns, a right side design is being analyzed.

Comment: What is the current status of the proposed “cap” over the I-290 expressway?

Response: The study team has developed preliminary concepts that include expanded bicycle/pedestrian facilities for each of the overhead bridges based upon stakeholder feedback and addressing current deficiencies, with special consideration given to bridges that include CTA station access. As we move into the next round of alternatives evaluation, we anticipate building upon these concepts. Separate to IDOT’s ongoing study, the Village of Oak Park studied various options for capping I-290, and concluded those efforts in 2005. Additionally, CTA is evaluating wider bridge options to enhance customer access to stations as part of the Blue Line Vision Study. The Department will consider this information during this next phase of evaluation.

Comment: Who will fund the proposed bike path along Harrison?

Response: Regarding cost participation for bike paths, the Department’s policy requires local agencies to cover 20% of the construction cost, plus a 15% engineering fee for engineering.

However, there are a number of potential funding sources for local cost items. A local agency must also agree to take on maintenance and jurisdiction of the path. As we move into the next evaluation round, we will seek further input that will continue to shape the overall engineering concept, and discuss funding and other issues in more detail.

Comment: Will the Oak Park conservatory be affected in any way whatsoever, and if so, how?

Response: The Oak Park Conservatory would not be impacted by any of the proposals under consideration as part of our I-290 study. No additional right-of-way is needed in this area, and each of the alternatives stay within the existing “trench” or walled section of I-290.

Comment: Are you going to put up sound proof walls and landscaping near Harlem/Wisconsin/Maple/Wenonah?

Response: Regarding your comment about noise walls and aesthetics, we will be addressing these areas in the upcoming round of alternatives evaluation. In terms of the noise studies, in order to assess both noise levels and air quality, detailed engineering, which includes horizontal and vertical roadway design information and proposed traffic levels, is needed. This level of detail is currently underway for the remaining four alternatives which will allow us to advance these studies. The noise study will investigate existing noise levels, noise increases, locations where noise abatement (e.g., noise walls) is warranted, and the effectiveness and cost of providing noise abatement in accordance with State and Federal policies and procedures. A more focused discussion of aesthetics for the overall corridor will also be included in the next round of evaluation.

Comment: What plans are there to accommodate bicycle commuting from Oak Park to Medical Center and further east?

Response: The Department has been working with stakeholders to identify a system of bicycle and pedestrian improvements that enhance connections between modes and eliminate gaps in the existing network. Thus far, a continuous east-west path that connects the Prairie Path and Columbus Park has been identified, as well as expanded or new bike/pedestrian features at crossing structures. Further discussions are needed regarding an extension to the east of Columbus Park; at this point, on-street bicycle accommodations are envisioned within the City of Chicago to complete the connection to the Medical Center and further east. Discussions with the CSX and CTA do not indicate that additional available right-of-way exists in the trench for a bike path. In addition, comments from stakeholders indicate that they do not feel that the expressway grade level is an appropriate environment for non-motorized vehicles.

Comment: In the interim, how about express buses from the farther west suburbs – like the Sheridan express on Lake Shore Drive? That would eliminate many cars.

Response: There are currently a number of bus and rail services within or parallel to the I-290 corridor, including PACE and Metra. In terms of our alternatives analysis, we have studied various combinations of transit improvements in detail, and the conclusion, which is supported by studies by other agencies, is that stand alone transit improvements would not reduce congestion in any meaningful way. This is primarily because travel markets for highway and transit users are not the same. However, our approach is to improve all modes of

transportation, and with respect to express bus service, we are analyzing an initial service that would use the inside shoulders of a reconstructed I-290 corridor; this type of service would be more cost effective and more easily implemented, as compared to a heavy rail extension of the CTA Blue Line. We will continue to work with the transit agencies and other stakeholders to identify funding strategies and funding opportunities for transit improvements.

Comment: In Cincinnati, the overpasses are very wide, beautifully landscaped, and completely pedestrian friendly. Is there an effort to do that with the Ike overpasses at Lombard and East?

Response: The proposed preliminary interchange concepts include improvements to pedestrian and bicycle movements across the bridges to improve access to CTA stations, enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety and create a more pleasant crossing environment in and around the CTA stations. The Department is committed to working with local communities, regional bicycle groups and the CTA Blue Line Vision Study to develop engineering details to define these bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

Non-interchange cross-streets such as Lombard and East Avenue are also subject to similar development with regards to improved bicycle and pedestrian environments. These may include wider pathways and landscaping elements. The Department will continue to coordinate these crossings with stakeholders to define a preferred plan at these crossings.

Comment: How far do you expect to run the Blue Line westward – going to O’Hare would be awesome?

Response: The Department tested numerous transit alternatives including an extension of the Blue Line from its current limit out to Oak Brook and Lombard, using assumptions that maximize the performance of these transit alternatives. This analysis, which is supported by studies by other agencies, determined that a Blue Line extension to Mannheim Road was the most cost effective option. The analysis showed that 71% of new jobs are accessible by a transit extension to Mannheim Road compared to an extension to Oak Brook, and 89% of new regional transit trips occur with Blue Line Extension to Mannheim Road compared to Oak Brook extension at less than half the length. West of Mannheim Road, we are working with the transit agencies regarding an express bus service, which would use the inside shoulder of a reconstructed I-290 corridor.

The Department has been actively involving and coordinating with the transit agencies in this study, including Pace, Metra, Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Regional Transit Authority (RTA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Each agency has provided valuable input that has defined the alternatives being evaluated, and their continued participation in the study will be fundamental to achieving a solution that addresses the many needs in this corridor.

Comment: When will they start construction and how long will it take?

Response: At this time, no start date for construction has been set, and there is no funding beyond the study phase of this project. However, we will be identifying various funding and staging scenarios as part of this upcoming round of alternatives evaluation.

Comment: If IDOT and CTA acquire CSX tracks for the IKE improvements results in higher transportation costs for the Ferrara Pan, are the business retention tax credits available to offset these costs?

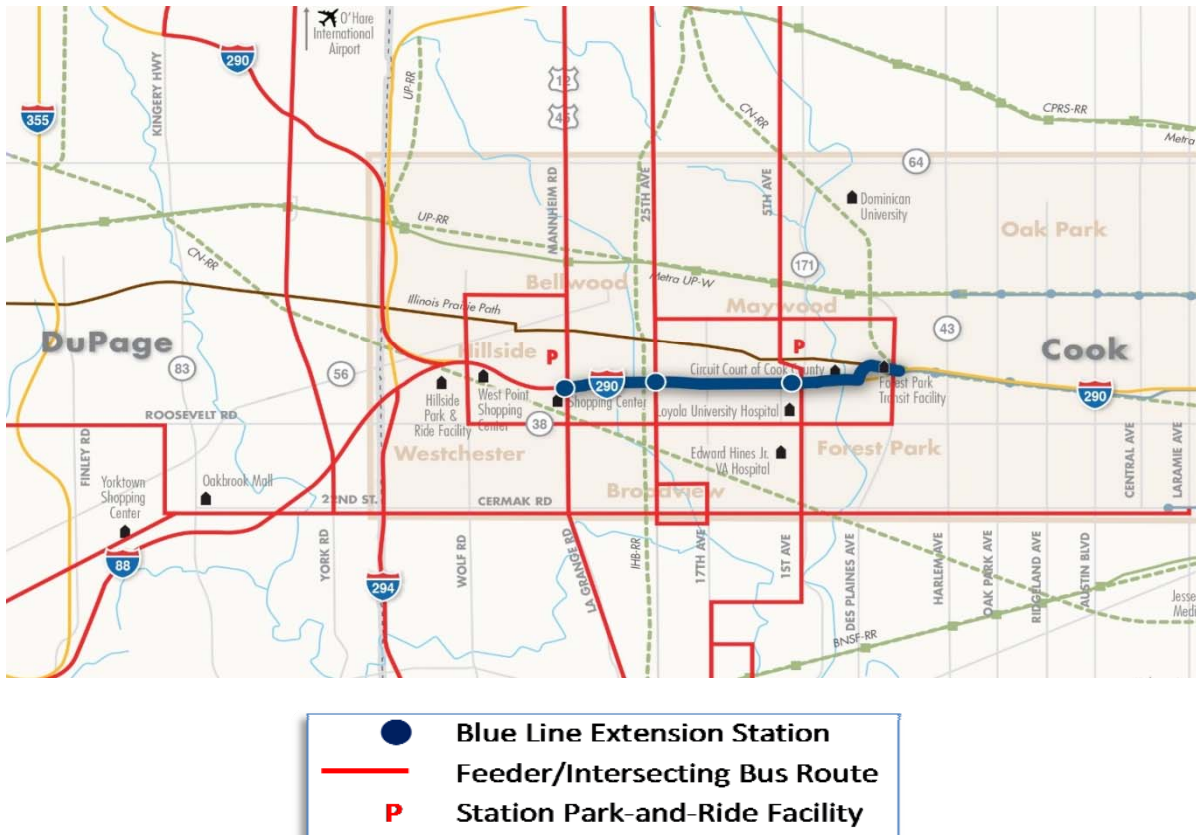
Response: We are developing an analysis of various options for using any available CSX or CTA right-of-way in the “trench” area of the I-290 corridor, and we anticipate presenting and discussing this information this summer, during round #3 of the alternatives evaluation. The Department does not have any plans to preclude freight service in the corridor and has only approached the CSX regarding unused or available space based on their current and future needs.

Comment: Imperative to extend Blue Line. People will use the “EI,” if convenient, possibly an express as Metra has.

Response: The Department has conducted extensive studies of transit options during both round #1 and #2 of the I-290 alternatives evaluation process and we’re partnering with the CTA relative to improving the existing Blue Line. In addition, transit options have been studied independently (Cook DuPage transit planning study, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning).

There is an abundance of existing transit services in the study area, including Metra, Pace, and CTA lines. While transit usage for work trips is higher in the study area (21% versus 12% regionally) some of these existing services are underutilized. We are working with the region’s transit providers, communities, and other stakeholders to improve existing transit services, particularly along the Blue Line.

In terms of the I-290 alternatives, each includes an extension of the CTA Blue Line to Mannheim Road and supporting bus service. See the attached figure for the bus feeder network supporting a Blue Line extension.

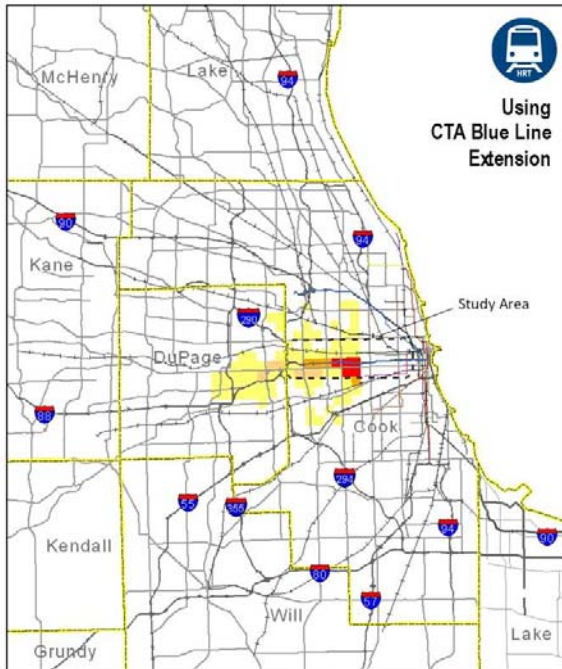


However, it is important to recognize that that a Blue Line extension will not replace the need for mobility improvements in the I-290 corridor. The travel markets for highway and transit users are not the same. As shown in the graphics below, the travel market served by I-290 is much broader than the market served by transit, and as such, the stand alone transit improvements that we 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. An expansion of existing Metra service would not address the mobility concerns on I-290 for similar reasons. Our approach is to develop multimodal alternatives, rather than choose one mode over another, and configure each mode to maximize its performance.

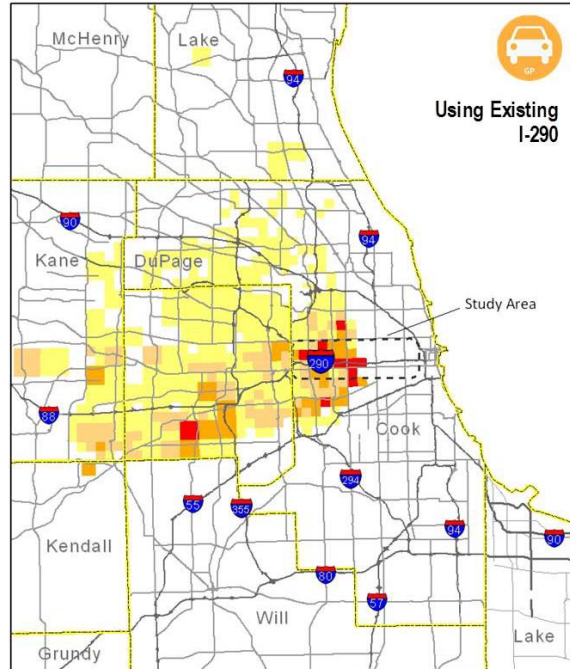
Regarding your comments about an express service, our I-290 alternatives evaluation identified that a Blue Line extension does not induce significant new transit ridership and, therefore, would not justify an express service. In addition, simply providing a faster service, in the absence of other important factors such as supportive land uses, would not induce significant new transit ridership. Also, express service would, by design, skip stations to the east and could ultimately reduce service available to stations on the east end of the study area.

As part of the CTA Blue Line Vision study, the CTA is also evaluating the use of their right-of-way for expanded platforms and enhanced station accessibility. In addition, IDOT and the CTA are working with stakeholders to plan for and preserve a corridor for an extension of fixed transit service west of the Forest Park Station, which may initially be implemented as an express bus service.

BLUE LINE WORK TRIPS MARKET



I-290 WORK TRIPS MARKET



Comment: On one of your mockup boards, you have the following quote (see below). Please explain. “CSX options for using CSX ROW are also being studied.”

Response: Discussions with the CSX thus far have indicated that they will continue providing service through this corridor but that some ROW may be available for other uses. An analysis of options for using a portion of any available CTA or CSX right-of-way is ongoing. The CTA is also conducting the Blue Line Vision Study that will identify short- and long-term improvements within this corridor including any additional ROW needs that they may require. It should be noted that additional lanes on the expressway do not require additional ROW for their implementation. We anticipate presenting the results of our analysis thus far during evaluation round #3, which begins this summer.

Comment: What planning is being done in DuPage and other suburban counties to relieve pressure on the I-290 in Cook County and improve regional transit?

Response: Decades of regional social and economic growth, as well as many other factors, has contributed to congestion along I-290. In terms of strategies to encourage travel by other modes from suburban areas, it is important to note that the Metra system strongly serves this role, with over 80 million rides provided in 2013. The I-290 corridor serves a vital role both locally and regionally, and a complete reconstruction is warranted on the basis of facility condition alone.

In addition, the Department already deploys a broad range of technology such as digital message signs, ramp metering, interconnected traffic signals, surveillance, incident management, and real time traffic information. The I-290 corridor serves as a major gateway between the suburbs and the City, and given the existing settlement patterns and land uses, the corridor will continue to serve this function well into the future.

Comment: How will this project help reduce regional GHG emissions?

Response: In terms of reducing Green House Gas (GHG) emissions, we will be conducting an air quality analysis during this next round of alternatives evaluation. While each project is unique, our most recent example on a major project would be the Circle Interchange, which will reduce CO2 levels by 40,000 tons, as compared to the “no build” scenario. Below is a link to the documents regarding the Circle Interchange project:
http://www.circleinterchange.org/information_center/.

Comment: Has expanding an expressway in the last ten years been shown to solve or reduce congestion?

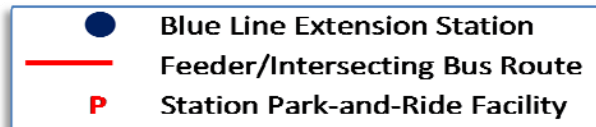
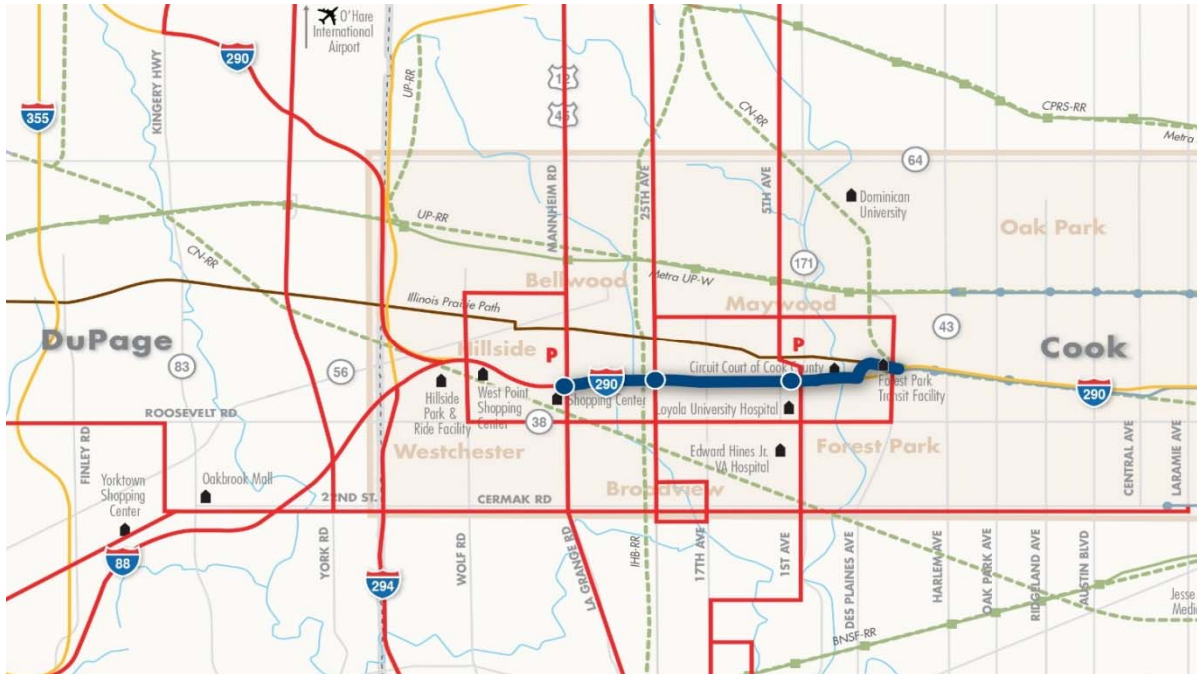
Response: It is important to note that mobility is only one of the concerns along I-290; there are also safety, facility condition and facility design concerns. Based upon facility condition alone, the I-290 corridor requires complete reconstruction. In terms of design, the corridor has substandard or incomplete bicycle/pedestrian accommodations, has poor connections to transit, and poor connections across it (a majority of the crossings do not meet ADA standards). There are an average of 2,500 crashes per year within the project limits, which can be related to substandard design elements and mobility problems.

In terms of mobility, existing conditions are a primary transportation need, with approximately 200,000 vehicles per day using the I-290 corridor; maintaining or improving this transportation corridor is vital for both local and regional travel. The build alternatives under consideration are based upon year 2040 travel forecasts, which incorporate a variety of assumptions about future travel in the region. The travel benefits associated with the build alternatives are significant, with travel time savings of up to 40% in a managed lane for year 2040 conditions, based upon our round #2 analysis.

Comment: Are any improvements being considered for Pace buses? For example, in Elmwood Park and Franklin buses run only every hour.

All four of the remaining build alternatives include an express bus service to/from the west that connects to the proposed Blue Line extension terminus at Mannheim Road; this service would connect large employment centers from the west, north, and south (see figure below). These proposals have been developed in through coordination with the region’s transit agencies, including Pace, Metra, Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Regional Transit Authority (RTA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Each agency has provided valuable input that has defined the alternatives being evaluated, and their continued participation in the study will be fundamental to achieving a solution that addresses the many needs in this corridor.

In terms of the I-290 alternatives, each includes an extension of the CTA Blue Line to Mannheim Road and supporting bus service.



Comment: What is the timetable for construction and how much land will be taken on the north side of the north lanes?

Response: There is currently no funding for any project development activities beyond the current Phase I study efforts. However, as part of our next round of evaluation (“round #3”), which begins this summer, we will be analyzing various funding and staging scenarios for both highway and transit improvements. We anticipate completion of Phase I by mid 2015.

With respect to land acquisition, the Department is proposing alternatives that stay within the existing I-290 mainline ROW footprint, either through special design features or the potential use of vacant CTA or CSX property adjacent to I-290. An analysis of options for utilizing available CTA or CSX property is ongoing, and we anticipate discussing our initial findings during round #3.

Comment: With increasing gas mileage and hybrid and electric cars, gasoline taxes collected are likely to fall over time. What revenue sources will be used to cover road construction and bonds going forward?

Response: In terms of funding, currently only the study phase of this project is funded. As part of the I-290 planning process, we will be evaluating funding, financing and staging options for constructing the project. Joint highway/transit funding scenarios will also be investigated.

Comment: With IDOT moving the center exit/entrance ramps to the right sides, how can we be assured that land will not be confiscated via “eminent domain” to make this possible?

Response: The Department is proposing alternatives that stay within the existing I-290 mainline right-of-way footprint, either through special design features or the potential use of vacant CTA or CSX property adjacent to I-290. As such, the Department will not be requiring residential properties at Harlem Avenue or Austin Boulevard. We are also analyzing drainage and a range of engineering design features to determine the maximum extent that the ramps can be lowered.

Comment: Noise – Umbrella barrier over ramp. Harlem NB backup at WB on ramp.

Response: In order to assess both noise levels and air quality, detailed engineering, which includes horizontal and vertical roadway design information and proposed traffic levels, is needed. This level of detail is currently being developed for the remaining four alternatives which will allow us to advance these studies. For noise, as we move into this next evaluation round, noise monitoring, modeling, and abatement studies will be conducted. The noise study will investigate existing noise levels, noise increases, impacted areas, and the effectiveness and cost of providing noise abatement (e.g. noise walls) in accordance with State and Federal policies and procedures.

With respect to operations at the Harlem Avenue interchange, our objective is to address multiple factors, including improved bicycle/pedestrian access, improved transit access, and improved interchange operations. Our initial findings will be presented during evaluation round #3, which begins this summer.

Comment: What is the estimated impact (short and long term) on real estate values just adjacent to the construction area? How many homes will be demolished?

Response: Based upon the Department’s previous experience with highway reconstruction projects, there has been no specific evidence that supports a particular influence on property values in either a positive or negative direction. The existing I-290 corridor has numerous deficiencies that will be addressed by this project. Improvements to address regional and local travel, access to jobs, safety, bicycle and pedestrian movements, and facility condition are proposed under this project. The overall goal is to create a project that is an asset to the adjoining communities.

The Department is proposing alternatives that stay within the existing I-290 mainline ROW footprint, with the exception of two small areas near 25th Avenue and 1st Avenue; no residential or commercial building acquisitions are needed to accommodate the additional lane and transit improvements along I-290.

Comment: Why can’t they move track (EL) over and use that part of the ditch?

Response: An analysis of options for using a portion of any available CTA or CSX right-of-way is ongoing. The CTA is also conducting the Blue Line Vision Study that will identify short- and long-term improvements within this corridor including any additional ROW needs that they may require. It should be noted that additional lanes on the expressway do not require additional

ROW for their implementation. We anticipate presenting the results of our analysis thus far during evaluation round #3, which begins this summer.

Comment: I heard the current commute is something like 18 minutes. The Wednesday Journal said all options only bring it down to 17 minutes. Why is it so small and why do anything for 1 min?

Response: Some project stakeholders have been disseminating incomplete information with respect to the congestion relief associated with the proposed I-290 alternatives. As noted in our presentations and reports, each of the 4 remaining alternatives improve upon the 17 hours of congestion, with one of the alternatives (“HOT 3+ & Toll & HCT”) reducing the congestion by over 8 hours. An even greater reduction would be achieved for users of the managed lanes (“HOV 2+”), with the 17 hours of congestion being reduced to less than 4 hours. It should also be noted that under the “No-Build” or “do nothing” scenario, congestion actually increases from 17 to 18 hours. In addition, the build alternatives provide up to \$685,000 in daily congestion relief, and up to 40% travel time savings in a managed lane.

Overall, it is important to note that mobility is only one of the concerns along I-290; there are also safety, facility condition and facility design concerns. Based upon facility condition alone, I-290 requires a complete reconstruction. The existing corridor also has poor connections to transit and poor connections across it (a majority of the crossings do not meet ADA standards). The goal is to address these needs, improve all modes, and provide an asset to the adjoining communities.

Comment: When will this project be completed? How many years?

Response: The ongoing I-290 Phase I study to identify the preferred alternative is anticipated to be completed in mid 2015. Currently, there is no funding for any project development activities beyond the current study phase. However, financing and staging scenarios will be developed in the upcoming round of alternatives evaluation, which begins this summer.

Comment: How can I learn more about the 4 options? What is the proposal for HOV lanes? Is it a serious option?

Response: The project website contains all of the project reports, meeting materials, and any current news regarding the project. Below is a link to the Public Meeting presentation which explains all 4 proposed alternatives in greater detail.

http://www.eisenhowerexpressway.com/info_center/meeting_materials.aspx

HOV and HOT (high occupancy toll) lanes have emerged as a key method for improving the efficiency of the existing transportation system nationally. As of 2010, there were approximately 3,300 miles of these special lanes, with hundreds of additional miles planned. 85% of managed lane users indicate that travel time savings is the main reason they choose to use those lanes, and based upon our analysis of managed lane options for I-290, a travel time savings of up to 40% could be achieved, while also providing improved travel performance in the local lanes.

Comment: Having all four lanes used as toll lanes seems impractical – what are the advantages and disadvantages of this option?

Response: Throughout the I-290 planning process, the Department and stakeholders have collaborated to identify and test a variety of innovative strategies. One such strategy, tolling, can potentially increase the efficiency of the I-290 corridor while minimizing the expansion of the roadway footprint. However, there are tradeoffs with certain tolling strategies; our round #2 analysis has shown that tolling all lanes on I-290 substantially reduces congestion on the expressway, but also causes a substantial diversion of traffic onto arterial streets. Our analysis also indicates that adding a High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lane in each direction, with the remaining lanes free or for general purpose use, provides a more balanced method for adding capacity to the I-290 corridor, with generally positive effects upon the arterial system, while also encouraging car pooling. We will continue to analyze and discuss these issues in evaluation round #3, which begins this summer.

Comment: Can the secretary explain how environmental justice has been addressed for this project? Does IDOT really need to evaluate in detail whether the west side of Chicago, Maywood, Bellwood, Cicero, etc has a high amount of residents that are minority and low income, in comparison with Oak Brook, Naperville, Wheaton, etc that the expansion will serve the most?

Response: The key principle associated with Environmental Justice (EJ) is whether there is a *disproportionate and adverse impact* upon low income and minority populations. During evaluation round #3, we will have sufficient detail to assess EJ effects. However, we would also offer that current conditions do not benefit low income or minority populations, which are users of the I-290 corridor. Thousands of local residents access the existing I-290 corridor for their daily travel needs, and the existing corridor is congested, crash prone, and has been closed due to flooding on a number of occasions. The westbound congestion approaching Austin Boulevard spills back for several miles on I-290 and onto local arterials. Also, the westbound approach to Austin Boulevard has the highest westbound crash rate and injury crash rate within the study limits. The existing corridor has substandard bike and pedestrian accommodations, as well as poor connections to transit. These conditions directly impact local residents that use the I-290 corridor, or indirectly impact them in situations where regional traffic is diverting to the arterial system. The four remaining build alternatives provide: congestion relief; improved safety; improved bike and pedestrian accommodations; improved connections to transit; and additional travel choices.

Comment: The goal of the project is to clearly increase the number of cars driving through our community. This means an increase in the amount of pollution being spewed into our environment. How do you plan to mitigate the negative impact on the air quality we breathe?

Response: The I-290 corridor serves both local and regional travel, with thousands of local residents accessing the facility each day. One of the study's primary objectives, which is supported by a broad array of stakeholders, is to improve every mode of travel in the I-290 corridor, including bicyclists, pedestrians, transit users and motorists, while also creating an asset for each community. In doing so, our goal is to move more people through the corridor, rather than more cars; consistent with that goal, each alternative includes bike/pedestrian and transit improvements, with a heavy emphasis on managed lane improvements for the roadway portion of these multimodal alternatives.

Mobility is only one of the concerns along I-290; there are also safety, facility condition and facility design concerns. Based upon facility condition alone, I-290 requires a complete

reconstruction. The existing corridor also has poor connections to transit and poor connections across it (a majority of the crossings do not meet ADA standards). The goal is to address these needs, improve all modes, and provide an asset to the adjoining communities.

With respect to air quality effects, a design and refined traffic information is required; these studies, as well as social and economic analyses, will be conducted during round #3, which involves the development of geometric design and refined traffic information. It is also important to note that with respect to air quality, an increase in traffic volumes would not necessarily equate to a negative air quality effect, as improved traffic flow can substantially influence the results of the analysis. This would suggest that the current situation on I-290, which is characterized by long periods of gridlocked traffic, is an air quality concern today.

Comment: Where can we go to vet the data that supports claims to reduce pollution or increase traffic flow, etc?

Response: As noted at the meeting, all of the technical information is available on the project website (www.eisenhowerexpressway.com), using the “information center” tab. The following are highlights of some key technical reports that support the analysis thus far:

- Analysis of existing conditions, February 2011; this report summarizes the existing mobility, facility condition and safety concerns in the I-290 corridor
http://eisenhowerexpressway.com/pdfs/exist_trans_sys_perform_report_fulldraft_202010Aug.pdf
- Analysis of existing conditions – addendum to address expanded study area, April 2013 ,
<http://eisenhowerexpressway.com/pdfs/i290%20ectm%20roadway%20geometryaddendum%202013april11.pdf>
- Alternatives Evaluation, MAY 2012; this report summarizes our findings associated with rounds #1 and #2 of the I-290 alternatives evaluation -
<http://eisenhowerexpressway.com/pdfs/i290%20alternatives%20evaluation%20summary%202012%20may%2030%20tracked.pdf>

With respect to stakeholder involvement and presentations of the technical material, we suggest the following links:

- Community Advisory Group (CAG) Meetings – a total of 17 CAG meetings have been hosted since beginning the planning process in the fall of 2009, and have served as a primary forum for gathering community feedback for every aspect of the overall I-290 planning process- http://eisenhowerexpressway.com/info_center/meeting_materials.aspx
- Public Meetings – three rounds of public meetings have been hosted thus far, and the presentation videos, which summarize our findings and next steps, are posted here.
http://eisenhowerexpressway.com/info_center/meeting_materials.aspx
- Newsletters – three project newsletters have been distributed, and summarize the status of the study through the round #2 evaluation, and can be found here.
http://eisenhowerexpressway.com/info_center/newsletters.aspx

Comment: CSX is willing to sell one track from its right-of-way, allowing CTA to shift its tracks further south. That would allow space for more auto lanes. Is funding available for CSX purchase and for CTA shift?

Response: We are developing an analysis of various options for using any available CSX or CTA right-of-way in the “trench” area of the I-290 corridor, and we anticipate completing and presenting the analysis for discussion this summer, as part of the round #3 of the alternatives evaluation.

In terms of funding, currently only the study phase of this project is funded. However, as part of the I-290 planning process, we will be evaluating funding, financing and staging options for constructing the project.

Comment: How will this affect the Harlem Ramp traffic gridlock at southbound Lake St at Harlem?

Response: Regarding your question about southbound vehicle stacking at the Harlem Avenue interchange, our analysis is underway, and we will report our findings this summer, as part of the next evaluation round. It is important to note that our evaluation is not solely focused upon improving interchange operations – we are also placing a strong emphasis on improving bicycle and pedestrian safety, as well as transit access.

Comment: Will this new upgrade include Forest Park, IL and Chicago, IL? Will this upgrade create new jobs for Oak Park residents? And what about tax breaks?

Response: The study limits extend from Hillside (Mannheim Road) to Chicago (Racine Avenue). In terms of the benefits of the project, congestion on I-290 affects each community, including the Village of Oak Park, either through reducing cut through traffic on local arterials, or reducing the periods of gridlocked traffic on the mainline expressway, which is an important environmental concern. Based upon our analysis to date, the alternatives would result in up to \$685,000 in daily productivity savings. With respect to taxes, this issue is beyond the Department’s purview.

In terms of funding, currently only the study phase of this project is funded. However, as part of the I-290 planning process, we will be evaluating funding, financing and staging options for constructing the project.

Comment: Could the State and/or the City of Chicago implement a congestion tax for the center city, similar to London’s system to fund transit without having to ask Washington got approval?

Response: In terms of funding, currently only the study phase of this project is funded. However, as part of the I-290 planning process, we will be evaluating funding, financing and staging options for constructing the project. The tolling strategies currently being studied as part of the I-290 project would require a change in current Federal policy; discussions are underway to develop a new Federal transportation bill, which may or may not address tolling options.

Comment: How far and high will the now off ramps be and what will happen to nearby bridges (i.e. Lombard)?

Response: As part of evaluation round #3, we are evaluating methods to lower mainline I-290 to reduce both ramp and cross street elevations. Air and noise studies are also being developed to determine whether the effects of the proposed layout, as compared to the “no build” condition, which would leave the current ramp configuration in place. The results of all of these analyses will be presented and discussed with stakeholders in the coming months, and refinements to the alternatives will be made as the planning process advances through round #3. With respect to Lombard specifically, the right hand ramps would be back at expressway grade beneath the structure and no change in the Lombard profile is anticipated.

Comment: What is the reason for closing California stop on the Blue Line? Please consider reopening the stop because people need services at Mt. Sinai Hospital and in the neighborhood.

Response: The CTA’s current Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study is evaluating several service and station alternatives. Stakeholders are welcome to submit comments related to the existing Blue Line and to the potential Blue Line extension within the study area boundaries. If you have comments, please write the CTA at Chicago Transit Authority, Attn: Ryan Mouw, Government and Community Relations Officer, 567 W Lake Street, Chicago, IL 60661 or submit your comments by email to blueweststudy@transitchicago.com. All comments will be reviewed by the project team and included in the project documentation. Also, please review the Vision Study’s website for the latest project information <http://www.transitchicago.com/blueweststudy/>.

Comment: Will IDOT and CTA jointly seek funding? An I-290 “improvement” that leaves the “provision” for a Blue Line extension unfunded is not acceptable. An unfunded provision turns into a broken promise.

Response: As part of this next round of alternatives evaluation, we will be analyzing and discussing funding and staging scenarios, including joint funding opportunities that could leverage improvements to multiple modes.

With respect to an extension of the CTA Blue Line, the Department’s I-290 study will lay important ground work for future studies and implementation by establishing the envelope for future transit improvements. Studies thus far, by multiple agencies, have concluded that a heavy rail extension would provide low benefits at a relatively high cost. Therefore, the Department is working with the region’s transit agencies to develop a more cost effective alternative for initial service, including an express bus that would operate on the shoulder of a reconstructed I-290 corridor.

Comment: Are you able to create an Austin/Columbus Park Station using the abandoned Central platform?

Response: The CTA’s current Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study is evaluating several service and station alternatives. Stakeholders are welcome to submit comments related to the existing Blue Line and to the potential Blue Line extension within the study area boundaries. If you have comments, please write the CTA at Chicago Transit Authority, Attn: Ryan Mouw, Government and Community Relations Officer, 567 W Lake Street, Chicago, IL 60661 or submit your comments by email to blueweststudy@transitchicago.com. All comments will be reviewed by the project team and included in the project documentation. Also, please review the Vision Study’s website for the latest project information <http://www.transitchicago.com/blueweststudy/>.

Comment: Please vote for “transportation” funds used for enhanced CTA stations to Oak Brook. The alternative above is environmentally sound, enhanced community connections, promotes walking.

Response: With respect to an extension of the CTA Blue Line, the Department’s I-290 study will lay important ground work for future studies and implementation by establishing the envelope for future transit improvements. Studies thus far, by multiple agencies, have concluded that a heavy rail extension would provide low benefits at a relatively high cost. Therefore, the Department is working with the region’s transit agencies to develop a more cost effective alternative for initial service, including an express bus that would operate on the shoulder of a reconstructed I-290 corridor.

Comment: Secretary Schneider said we cannot pave out way out of congestion, but that is exactly what all 4 alternatives do. Why is there not an option that does not widen the Eisenhower but focuses on the CTA instead?

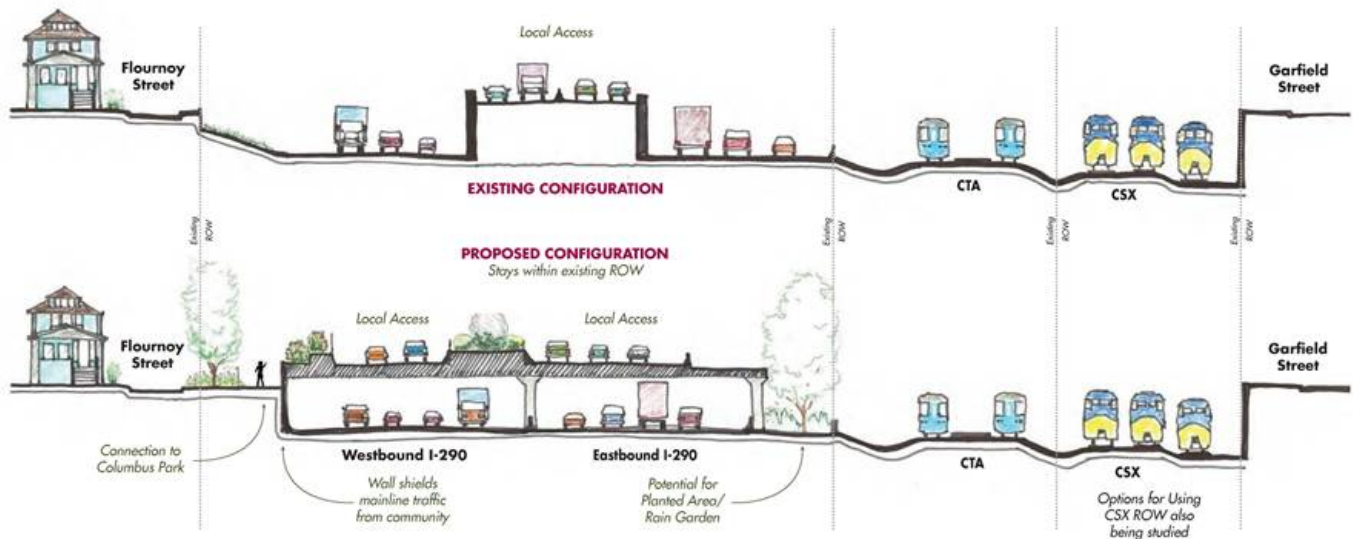
Response: The Department studied “non widening” options, both in evaluation Rounds 1 and 2, which would rely upon an extended Blue Line for any additional capacity. Our updated evaluation of Round 2 alternatives included two new “non widening” alternatives that were suggested by the Village of Oak Park and Citizens for Appropriate Transportation (CAT); these alternatives include features that would further restrict flow on I-290 (i.e., the Village plan calls for high toll rates on all lanes, the CAT plan calls for converting the existing inside lanes to managed lanes). The major effect of these strategies was a diversion of traffic from I-290 and a worsening of arterial congestion. As such, these alternatives did not perform well enough to be carried further. The same evaluation criteria were used for every alternative. We also re scored the round 2 alternatives using a methodology suggested by CAT, which confirmed our original findings. Our technical studies, which include the scoring of alternatives, as well as our Corridor Advisory Group presentations, are documented on the project website.

With respect to an extension of the CTA Blue Line, the Department’s I-290 study will lay important ground work for future studies and implementation by establishing the envelope for future transit improvements. Studies thus far, by multiple agencies, have concluded that a heavy rail extension would provide low benefits at a relatively high cost. Therefore, the Department is working with the region’s transit agencies to develop a more cost effective alternative for initial service, including an express bus that would operate on the shoulder of a reconstructed I-290 corridor.

Comment: The proposal is for an additional lane with ramps running above them. The ramps and the proposed noise wall will be 25 to 35 ft above Harrison Street. In other words the noise wall will be taller than most houses in the community, cutting off views and acting as a platform for launching particulate into the community. NEPA policy is to avoid impacts on the community. How does this proposal comply?

Response: First, it is important to note that the NEPA process involves a continuous cycle of analysis, review, and refinement – and that the I-290 NEPA process is ongoing, with additional engineering and environmental detail being added, and further community input being sought. As such, final decisions have not been made, and further changes may be made to the alternatives as technical studies and stakeholder/agency coordination advances. We recognize that the height of the ramps is an important issue with respect to the development and

refinement of alternatives at the Harlem Avenue and Austin Boulevard interchanges. Studies are ongoing to determine the maximum extent of any lowering of I-290 as well as lowering the associated interchange ramps; however, it is also important to note that ramps would not exceed the existing cross-street elevations since they must intersect the bridges in the center above the expressway. The conceptual plan places the proposed right-hand ramp elevation approximately 10' above the frontage road elevation and between 40' and 60' away from the existing buildings. The figure below represents a before and after configuration of the proposed ramps just west of Austin Boulevard and their relationship to the existing buildings along the frontage roads.



Comment: What part of this expansion is funded by IDOT and is it true that the extras, bike lanes, wider bridges, easier access to public transport via Blue Line will be funded elsewhere? If funds not available through outside groups what are odds of getting the extras completed?

Response: Regarding cost participation for bike paths and other aesthetics, the Department's policy requires local agencies to cover a percentage of the construction cost, plus a fee for engineering. A local agency must also agree to take on maintenance and jurisdiction of the improvements. As for widened bridges, the Department's Complete Streets Policy is the basis for providing improved pedestrian and bicycle amenities across the bridges. These amenities are included on the replacement cost for the bridges. Additional bridge widths, beyond what is needed for safe and efficient travel can be coordinated with the local municipalities. When we move into the next evaluation round, we will refine the engineering design and develop costs for further discussion.

Comment: Was any thought given to using funds to promote better, faster, more economical mass transit to make travel from outer burbs to the city more attractive? Won't adding another lane only increase the volume of traffic along with its associated pollution?

Response: In general, the Metra system already supports travel between suburban areas and the City, with over 80 million rides served in 2013. As part of the ongoing I-290 study, the Department studied “non widening” options, both in evaluation Rounds 1 and 2, which would rely upon an extended Blue Line for any additional capacity. Our updated evaluation of Round 2 alternatives included two new “non widening” alternatives that were suggested by the Village of Oak Park and Citizens for Appropriate Transportation (CAT); these alternatives include features that would further restrict flow on I-290 (i.e., the Village plan calls for high toll rates on all lanes, the CAT plan calls for converting the existing inside lanes to managed lanes). The major effect of these strategies was a diversion of traffic from I-290 and a worsening of arterial congestion. As such, these alternatives did not perform well enough to be carried further. The same evaluation criteria were used for every alternative. We also re scored the round 2 alternatives using a methodology suggested by CAT, which confirmed our original findings. Our technical studies, which include the scoring of alternatives, as well as our Corridor Advisory Group presentations, are documented on the project website.

In addition, it is important to note that there is already an extensive transit system in the study area, which is currently underutilized.

With respect to an extension of the CTA Blue Line, the Department’s I-290 study will lay important ground work for future studies and implementation by establishing the envelope for future transit improvements. Studies thus far, by multiple agencies, have concluded that a heavy rail extension would provide low benefits at a relatively high cost. Therefore, the Department is working with the region’s transit agencies to develop a more cost effective alternative for initial service, including an express bus that would operate on the shoulder of a reconstructed I-290 corridor.

An additional lane would not necessarily worsen air quality, given that many factors influence the analysis, including the efficiency of the travel flow. The current situation, which is characterized by long periods of gridlocked traffic on I-290 and cross streets, is an air quality concern. Our next round of evaluation will include the necessary level of engineering detail to perform air quality studies. A variety of technical studies, as well as stakeholder feedback will influence the development of a preferred alternative that will be an asset for each adjoining community.

Comment: Will the new plan improve “throughput” on Harlem across the Ike? It is normally backed up because of cars lined up to get on going east or west.

Response: Our analysis is underway, and we will report our findings this summer, as part of the next evaluation round. It is important to note that our evaluation is not solely focused upon improving interchange operations – we are also placing a strong emphasis on improving bicycle and pedestrian safety, as well as transit access.