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## **Hawthorn Woods seeks to change the conversation on the Route 53 Discussion**

Hawthorn Woods, IL – In a letter dated March 30, 2015 to the Illinois Tollway Authority Board, the Village of Hawthorn Woods has asked for the Toll Authority to delay any further action on the proposed Rt. 53 extension feasibility studies. The Village of Hawthorn Woods has assembled its own internal task force to address and remedy some flaws that were discovered in the BRAC (Blue Ribbon Advisory Council) report that was released to the public late last year. “The BRAC report is flawed in several of its foundational assumptions,” stated Mayor Joseph Mancino. “If the goal of the BRAC report is to gain consensus among the Lake County Communities, then the municipalities who lie in the direct corridor of the proposed roadway need to be at the planning table.”

During the latest attempt to get local consensus on the road alignment and funding, recommendations were made in the BRAC report that negated the prior recommendations for the alignment around, rather than through, the Village of Hawthorn Woods’ most environmentally sensitive areas. Pamela O. Newton, the Village’s Chief Operating Officer, stated, “We have documentation from numerous agencies recommending avoiding the highly sensitive Indian Creek Wetland Complex. Those agencies recommended a route around, rather than through, the pristine environmental ecosystem.” The BRAC report was released with this critical omission and suggests the road’s alignment be designed through the wetlands. The Village Officials believe this is one of the major flaws in the BRAC report, which serves as the foundation for the Tollway’s next steps in planning the controversial road. The Village is seeking an amendment to the report to include the route previously agreed to after months of contentious public hearings and years of debate. “In fact, the Route 53 (FAP 342) right-of-way signs are currently located in the environmentally preferred route, which the BRAC report failed to include,” said Newton. (See photo)

Hawthorn Woods, and many other key Lake County Communities that lie within the road’s corridor, were not invited to be members of the Blue Ribbon Advisory Council who made recommendations to the Illinois Tollway Board regarding land use, funding, design standards, lighting, and alignment that has a direct impact on communities that lie in the path of the proposed toll road. Several municipalities in the physical alignment abstained or voted against the financing recommendations recently released by the Special Finance Committee tasked with finding a way to pay for the \$2.4 billion dollar project.

While the Village of Hawthorn Woods has consistently supported regional transportation improvement efforts, the conversations have always initiated with the alignment avoiding the environmentally sensitive area as documented during the previous tollway discussions in the late 1990’s. “To ask the Tollway Board to now spend \$100 Million dollars in a preliminary design for a tollway based on a flawed foundation doesn’t make for sound fiscal diligence,” stated Mancino. “We need to change the conversation, get the critical stakeholders, specifically the municipalities most directly impacted by the physical road, to the table.”

Village Trustee Kelly Corrigan, who is working with the Mayor on this issue as part of the Village’s task force replied, “The Tollway Board has an opportunity to be inclusive in a direct conversation, rather than an advisory panel of political appointees if we want to ensure a unified consensus for the region. Without the impacted communities at the table, there can be no opportunity for conversation or consensus of support. We need to change the conversation and include all impacted municipalities in the discussion.”

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### **ABOUT THE VILLAGE OF HAWTHORN WOODS**

In 1958, Hawthorn Woods became Lake County’s 31st municipality and distinguished itself as an upscale, friendly community that placed a high value on the protection of natural resources. Hawthorn Woods is recognized for its beautiful open spaces and park amenities as well as great schools, friendly business districts, and professional services. A full service Police Department, Public Works Department, Finance Department, Building Department, and Parks and Recreation Department all work together to provide excellence in service to the citizens, visitors, and business community of Hawthorn Woods. For more information, visit [www.vhw.org](http://www.vhw.org).