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Hawthorn Woods urges Governor Rauner to assist in reaching consensus in the Rt. 53/120 Tollway extension discussion

HAWTHORN WOODS, IL – In a recent letter sent to Governor Rauner, the Village of Hawthorn Woods is asking for the governor's assistance reaching true consensus regarding the Route 53 proposed Tollway extension in Lake County.

In the letter to the Governor, Mayor Joseph Mancino points out that "While the Village of Hawthorn Woods has been a supporter of regional transportation route improvements, your administration has inherited a Blue Ribbon Advisory Council's report (the BRAC Report) that we believe is flawed for many reasons and has led to the lack of consensus on the project. As our Governor, I want you to know there is not a consensus to proceed among all of the communities in the corridor of the proposed Route 53 project in Lake County. The BRAC committee did not include the critical players, your stakeholders, at the table in conversation. In fact, of the very few municipalities that were represented on the BRAC, only one lies in the actual corridor of the proposed extension."

The Village is asking Governor Rauner to consider the following three steps:

- The Village of Hawthorn Woods respectfully requests that no new expenditures on the Route 53 study are authorized until the Tollway Board convenes with all communities within the proposed corridor.
- The BRAC report needs to be amended to reflect the correct alignment of the roadway before a flawed public record is propagated, which would create confusion and conflict amongst our shared constituency. The alignment as referenced in the BRAC document is not the preferred alignment as suggested by years of debate from the federal, state and local agencies. We need to incorporate the previous recommendations from the Illinois Department of Transportation, The United States Environmental Protection Agency, Region V, the Lake County Stormwater Commission, Illinois Department of Conservation, the Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority before another dollar is spent on this effort.
- With State projects and initiatives on hold during budget discussions until the fiscal health of the State is restored, we request this new initiative be cautiously suspended until the State can be better prepared to face the impact of a new \$100 million study expenditure.

The proposed Illinois Tollway Route 53 extension into Lake County has been a long discussed transportation route, with controversial environmental impacts and budgetary shortfalls. In the fall of 2011 the Illinois Tollway created the Illinois Route 53/120 Blue Ribbon Advisory Council (BRAC) to assist in the planning and potential building of the Illinois Route 53/120 project in Lake County. More commonly known as the BRAC, this council completed its work in 2012, recommending to the Tollway to continue studying the proposed road. In response to this BRAC work, the Tollway convened a special Finance Committee to continue the feasibility study of the road and recommend funding/financing options. The finance committee recently recommended to the Toll Board to move to the next step, which includes an approximate \$100 Million Phase 1 study. Hawthorn Woods, represented by Mayor Mancino on this committee, voted against the recommendation to continue studying the proposed project.

The BRAC group was assembled by appointment from a previous administration and did not include representatives from the municipalities who lie in the immediate path of the proposed road corridor – those that stand to lose the most, and be burdened with the most negative impacts. Trustee Kelly Corrigan, a Village Trustee assigned to the Village's task force on Route 53 commented, "It is impossible to gain consensus of the municipalities without a conversation that includes the actual municipalities. We need a pragmatic approach to build consensus on such an important and costly project."

As a voting member of the Rt. 53/120 Finance Committee, Mancino points out that several communities in the Rt. 53 corridor did not affirmatively support the Finance Committee's recommendation to the Tollway Board in his letter to the Governor. "I write to request specific action take place before the Tollway Board proceeds with the

proposed expenditure of an additional \$100 Million study for the proposed extension of Route 53 through Lake County. With the current fiscal condition of our State, I am certain you can appreciate my immediate concerns,” Mancino wrote.

The Village of Hawthorn Woods believes that gathering these stakeholders now is imperative to the corridor consensus that is critical to the Route 53 success. Those who are directly impacted by the physical location of the extension of Rt. 53 through their community need a place at the table in order to reach true consensus and avoid a rise in vocal opposition.

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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.