



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 27, 2017

**ILLINOIS TOLLWAY BOARD AGREES TO ADVANCE PLANNING FOR EXPANSION OF CENTRAL TRI-STATE TOLLWAY (I-294) PROJECT AS PART OF MOVE ILLINOIS**

*No toll rate increase required for recommended alternative improvements to increase capacity, reduce congestion and improve travel reliability*

**DOWNERS GROVE, IL** – The Illinois Tollway Board of Directors today agreed to move forward with planning for a \$4 billion rebuilding project on the Central Tri-State Tollway (I-294) between Balmoral Avenue and 95<sup>th</sup> Street to increase capacity, reduce congestion and improve travel reliability. The Board also agreed to expand the Tollway’s *Move Illinois* Program commitment to more than \$14 billion in spending over 15 years, without requiring an increase in toll rates.

“A year ago, we asked Tollway staff to rethink plans for a short-term fix that would rebuild the Central Tri-State Tollway as it is, and instead, take a critical look at existing and future needs that we could address as part of our construction,” said Tollway Board Chairman Bob Schillerstrom. “I’m pleased that the concepts presented today, provide the long-term vision we were looking for to guide our planning as we work to deliver a truly innovative and forward-thinking roadway to better serve our customers and the regional transportation network.”

The enhancements included in the alternative recommendation approved by the Board will allow the Tollway to rebuild roadway and improve bridges on the 22-mile-long portion of I-294, as well as construct additional lanes to relieve congestion, improve interchanges to increase access and work to deliver solutions for stormwater, noise abatement and freight.

The Tollway’s analysis estimates improvements will reduce stop-and-go traffic and delays and result in significant reductions in peak travel times, including a 55 percent reduction in time it would take to drive the full length of the Tollway.

The next steps in the project will be for Tollway staff to work with stakeholders, customers, communities and their residents along the corridor to deliver a master plan for \$2.1 billion in additional improvements to complement the \$1.9 billion rebuilding project already approved for the Central Tri-State Tollway Project.

The Tollway has already received letters of support for plans to move forward with the Central Tri-State Project from Chicago Alderman Gilbert Villegas, American Council of Engineering Companies, Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, Choose DuPage, City of Chicago, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Hispanic American Construction Industry Association, Illinois Road and Transportation Builders Association, Greater Oak Brook Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development, Pace Suburban Bus, West Central Municipal Conference, Illinois Economic Policy Institute, Cook County, Village of Justice, International Union of Operating Engineers Local 150, Village of Rosemont and Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

The Tollway will continue working collaboratively with individual communities, businesses and the public to complete the master plan and design work for:

- Building additional lanes, including integrating a Flex Lane through the full length of the corridor, which is a wide inside shoulder with access controlled through the use of SmartRoad technology.
- Delivering improvements at the two major system interchanges at I-290 and I-55.
- Providing for regional stormwater solutions in partnership with the Chicago Metropolitan Water Reclamation District and individual communities.
- Consider additional noisewalls, aesthetics and quality-of-life improvements such as local park enhancements, tree plantings and bike and pedestrian connections.
- Considering new truck parking opportunities to reduce freight congestion and access.

The Tollway Board's decision to move forward with the expanded Central Tri-State Tollway Project follows a review and recommendation by the Tollway Customer Service and Planning Committee on April 24 and presentation to the public at open house meetings held April 24-26 in Hinsdale, Justice and Schiller Park. Project information along with the public presentations and other materials are available online at [illinoistollway.com/outreach](http://illinoistollway.com/outreach).

In addition to agreeing to move forward with the master plan for the Central Tri-State Tollway Project, the Board's action also increases the Illinois Tollway's 15-year *Move Illinois* Program from \$12 billion to \$14 billion. The Tollway will be able to fund the \$4 billion project without an increase in current toll rates through additional bonding in 2023 and 2024 supported by incremental revenue from additional lanes on the Central Tri-State and lower debt service for bonds already issued. Tollway debt service coverage will remain above 2.0 for all years.

The Central Tri-State Tollway opened in 1958 as part of the original Tollway system is a critical piece of the region's transportation network and economy. Currently, more than 115,000 people work within a mile of the Central-Tri-State Tollway.

Forming the backbone of the region's system of interstates, the Tri-State Tollway connects four other interstates, I-80, I-55, I-290, I-88, and I-90, with the new I-490 Tollway being built as part of the Elgin O'Hare Western Access Project set to become the sixth interstate connection. The corridor provides critical connections to both O'Hare International and Chicago Midway International Airports, and also plays an important role in Chicago's freight economy, which supports more than 176,000 jobs and generates \$12.3 billion in personal income.

### **About *Move Illinois***

The Illinois Tollway's 15-year, \$12 billion capital program, *Move Illinois: The Illinois Tollway Driving the Future*, is improving mobility, relieving congestion, reducing pollution, creating as many as 120,000 jobs and linking economies throughout the region. The first five years of *Move Illinois* is on schedule and within budget, delivering the rebuilt and widened Jane Addams Memorial Tollway (I-90) as a state-of-the-art 21<sup>st</sup> century corridor and opening a new interchange connecting the Tri-State Tollway (I-294) to I-57. Progress continues on projects addressing the remaining needs of the existing Tollway system, delivering the Elgin O'Hare Western Access Project and planning for emerging projects, including reconstruction of the Central Tri-State Tollway (I-294).

### **About the Illinois Tollway**

The Illinois Tollway is a user-fee system that receives no state or federal funds for maintenance and operations. The agency maintains and operates 292 miles of interstate tollways in 12 counties in Northern Illinois, including the Reagan Memorial Tollway (I-88), the Veterans Memorial Tollway (I-355), the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway (I-90), the Tri-State Tollway (I-94/I-294/I-80) and the Illinois Route 390 Tollway.

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