



NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ILLINOIS TOLLWAY CELEBRATING EARTH DAY BY SHARING WILDFLOWER SEEDS
Seed packet distribution promotes the restoration of pollinator habitats

DOWNERS GROVE, IL – The Illinois Tollway is celebrating Earth Day today by sharing 10,000 pollinator seed packets with customers that travel throughout the 294-mile Tollway system. The effort is aimed to support of its ongoing pollinator program to restore and create habitat for monarch butterflies and other important pollinators.

While supplies last, the Tollway is distributing seed packets to customers throughout the day through all the ways they interact with their customers. Seeds will be handed out by Tollway H.E.L.P. truck drivers, toll plaza employees, toll collectors, customer service center employees and to customers stopping by the Tollway headquarters in Downers Grove.

The first Earth Day on April 22, 1970, activated 20 million Americans from all walks of life and is widely credited with launching the modern environmental movement. The passage of the landmark Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act and many other groundbreaking environmental laws soon followed. More than 1 billion people now participate in Earth Day activities each year, making it the largest civic observance in the world.

The wildflower seed packets offered by the Tollway include two native flowers: *Asclepias tuberosa* (butterfly weed) a species of milkweed and *Echinacea pallida* (the pale purple coneflower) and will cover an area up to 25 square feet. These are drought-tolerant, full-sun species and will provide pollinators with an abundance of nectar throughout the summer.

The Illinois Tollway is committed to balancing the environmental impacts of its roadway projects through its implementation of wetland mitigation landscape projects that have local and regional benefits. The Tollway has adopted a landscape master plan as part of the agency's goal to plant 58,000 trees, shrubs and native plants on Tollway property as part of its 15-year, \$14 billion *Move Illinois* capital program.

The landscape master plan includes the seeding of native grasses and flowers in keeping with the Tollway's pollinator program goals. Working with The Conservation Foundation, with input from the Xerces Society, local nurseries and the Illinois Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Tollway developed a unique seed mix for use along Tollway right-of-way. These efforts are part of the agency's pollinator program to enhance and create habitat for monarch butterflies and other important pollinators along tollway roadsides throughout the 12 counties the Tollway serves.

For customers who may have missed the opportunity to interact with our employees, they still have an opportunity to be mailed a seed packet by "Liking" the Illinois Tollway's official Facebook page and either posting or messaging their home address on the site.

About the Illinois Tollway

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The Illinois Tollway is a user-fee system that receives no state or federal funds for maintenance and operations. The agency maintains and operates 294 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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