



19 East Chicago Avenue
Hinsdale, Illinois 60521
(630) 789-7000
www.villageofhinsdale.org

April 26, 2017

Mr. Robert Schillerstrom
Chair
Illinois State Tollway Authority
2700 Ogden Avenue
Downers Grove, IL 60515

Mr. Schillerstrom,

This Thursday, April 27, the Tollway Authority's Board of Directors (the "Board") is scheduled to vote on a plan to widen I-294 through Hinsdale. Just this Monday, April 24, the Tollway Authority's Customer Service and Planning Committee for the first time recommended that I-294 be widened, at a projected cost of \$4 billion. As you know full well, widening I-294 through Hinsdale will likely have a devastating impact on Hinsdale's property values and parks, increase noise levels in Hinsdale, and will possibly eliminate revenues Hinsdale currently receives from the Hinsdale Oasis. Yet despite this potential to cause serious damage to Hinsdale, the Tollway Authority had put forth no hard evidence to justify widening I-294 through Hinsdale.

At the public meeting at the Hinsdale Oasis on April 24 – just hours after the Customer Service and Planning Committee had voted to recommend the widening of I-294 – the Tollway Authority represented that its plans to widen I-294 are predicated upon anticipated future traffic volumes on I-294. Indeed, the recommendations for widening I-294 are supposedly based upon projected traffic volumes through the year 2040. Yet, we have seen no information that supports the Tollway Authority's representations concerning increased traffic volume by 2040. As far as we can tell, there is absolutely no support anywhere for the Tollway Authority's representations to the public, and the Board, that traffic volumes on I-294 will increase significantly by 2040.

Moreover, the Tollway Authority's representations at the April 24, 2017, Open House about current average daily traffic conditions on I-294 were vague, confusing and only raised more questions. First, the Tollway Authority gave no indication whether the perceived current congestion exists only during rush hours, or whether it exists throughout the day. Even a casual observer knows that I-294 through Hinsdale is congested at most for only a few hours a day during the morning and evening rush hours. Nor does it appear that any consideration has been given to how traffic patterns on I-294 compare to other highway systems that the Tollway uses as a benchmark. Again, even a casual observer knows that there are numerous highway systems in the

Chicago area that experience much greater traffic congestion for much greater portions of the day than I-294 through Hinsdale. In short, not only is there no information suggesting that congestion on I-294 will increase by 2040, there is no information suggesting that there is a current need to widen I-294 through Hinsdale.

But what is clear, from the Tollway Authority's own data, is that any congestion on I-294 is not caused by the stretch of I-294 through Hinsdale. During the peak travel time in the morning there is no congestion on the southbound Tri-State from Balmoral south to 95th. On the northbound side of the Tri-State during the morning peak there are various levels of congestion raging from "moderate" to "severe," but the severe traffic congestion occurs north of Hinsdale and is almost certainly attributed to the poorly engineered interchange of I-88 and I-290. It would certainly be prudent (and consistent with the Board's fiduciary obligations) to study whether re-engineering the I-88 and I-290 interchanges would alleviate the congestion before the Board rushes to vote to expand I-294 through Hinsdale.

The Tollway Authority's own data also shows that during peak congestion times in the evening critical congestion on the southbound side of I-294 begins north of Balmoral – which is north of the proposed widening of I-294. Congestion north of Balmoral should first be addressed to ascertain whether the widening of I-294 through Hinsdale is necessary to alleviate congestion on southbound I-294 during evening hours. On the northbound side there is only "light" to "moderate" congestion during the evening hours, which, once again, suggests I-294 need not be widened through Hinsdale.

The recommendation to widen I-294 through Hinsdale is being advanced far too quickly with no defensible justification having been provided to the Board or to the public. Given the irreparable harm that widening I-294 will have on our community we ask that the Board remove and defer the following items from the Board's April 27 agenda until the Board can be provided with hard data concerning current traffic congestion on I-294 and projected traffic congestion on I-294 through 2040. If our suspicions are correct, that data will confirm that there is absolutely no justification for widening I-294 through Hinsdale.

The agenda items in question that we request be removed and deferred include the following:

Item: 4.0.3 Committee Reports: Recommended Alternative: Central Tri-State Tollway (I-294); and,

Item: 4.04 Approval of modifications to the Move Illinois Program reflecting changes to the Central Tri-State Project;" and,

Item 4.0.3 Committee Reports: Recommended Alternative: Central Tri-State Tollway (I-294) was shared by Tollway staff in a presentation at the Customer Service and Planning Committee Meeting on April 24 at 2:30 pm at the Tollway Headquarters.

To avoid inflicting unnecessary and irreparable harm on Hinsdale, we urge the Board to slow down the approval process and base its decision on hard data – not on vague and overstated representations concerning current congestion and unsupported guesses about future congestion on I-294.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Cauley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tom Cauley

President
Village of Hinsdale

CC: Tollway Board