

Citizens Against the Sprawlway **UPDATE**

August 2008

\$37 million squandered; 5-mile freeway stub planned

IDOT has spent over \$37 million thus far on the Prairie Parkway – about \$30 million has been spent on the Prairie Parkway study and preliminary engineering and about \$7 million has been spent on land acquisition.



The state estimates the full 37-mile freeway between I-80 and I-88 will cost over \$1 billion. The initial freeway stub – from IL 71 to US 34 – is included in IDOT's 2009-2014 highway program at a cost of about \$210 million. IDOT wants to use \$207 million in federal earmarks – which must be matched by 20 percent in state funds.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement was issued in February, but the followup document, called the Record of Decision has been delayed for some months now by the Federal Highway Administration for undisclosed reasons. Both documents must be issued before any federal funds can be used for actual construction.

IDOT appears to have slowed the project – some \$32 million in work was planned for Fiscal Year 2008, which ended June 30, but IDOT has spent just one-fourth of the budgeted amount. Principal work deferred

includes construction engineering, land acquisition, and utility adjustments.

Some of the 2008 money may still be spent, and IDOT's Fiscal Year 2009 budget calls for \$16 million in land purchases between IL 71 and US 34. Previous purchases totaling \$7 million were made along the corridor for hardship or corridor protection reasons.

For more information:

Citizens Against the Sprawlway

website: <http://www.sprawlway.org> -- e-mail: info@Sprawlway.org

47+ Coalition website: <http://47plus.org>

IDOT's Prairie Parkway website: <http://www.prairie-parkway.com>

What about Illinois 47?

IDOT continues its single-minded focus on the five-mile stub of the Prairie Parkway from IL 71 to US 34 while legislators and others wonder why it is ignoring Illinois 47.

The state still plans to squander a quarter of a billion dollars on building just five miles of the freeway from Illinois 71 to US 34. The \$207 federal earmark funds a “north-south connector between I-80 and I-88,” and IDOT insists that “Congressional intent” requires that it spend the federal earmark money on a new freeway instead of giving motorists immediate traffic improvement on Illinois 47.

Meanwhile, IDOT’s five-year plan for Illinois 47 calls for just \$1.5 million in preliminary engineering work for improvements between Yorkville and Sugar Grove and a small section south of Yorkville. There are no plans for actual construction, and no mention of widening Illinois 47 through Yorkville even though \$4 million in federal funds has been available since 2005.

There is strong legislative support for a better alternative to the Prairie Parkway, like the Illinois 47 improvements. Those favoring such alternatives include State Sen. Chris Lauzen (R-Aurora), State Sen. Linda Holmes (D-Aurora), State Sen. Mike Nolan (D-Elgin), and State Rep. Linda Chapa LaVia (D-Aurora) and others.

U.S. Rep. Bill Foster, who succeeded Rep. Hastert, opposes any further federal funding for the Prairie Parkway and is looking at ways to shift the existing \$207 million federal earmark for a “north-south connector” to Illinois 47 instead of a new freeway.

Hastert’s \$2 Million Profit; Hopes for More

Former U.S. Rep. Dennis Hastert may be out of office but he continues to wield strength in highway politics while his real estate investments stand to earn more profits if the Prairie Parkway is built.

In March Gov. Blagojevich named him co-chairman of the Illinois Works Coalition developing the proposed capital project bill being considered by the state – giving him a central voice in what projects would be funded. The state is closed-mouth on how much it would spend on the Prairie Parkway, but reports indicate that \$200 million may be planned for the Prairie Parkway.

Hastert was widely criticized after selling land several miles from proposed Prairie Parkway interchanges in December 2005, just months after he secretly added earmarks for \$207 million to the federal transportation bill. That sale on 138 acres garnered him a quick personal profit of over \$2 million.

He and his two partners rolled part of that profit back into 126 acres on Miller Road, about 3 miles from the proposed US 34 interchange of the Prairie Parkway. He still owns 127 acres at his home site on Creek Road after selling off 69 acres in the 2005 sale.

Both properties would likely grow in value if the Prairie Parkway were built, particularly if it were extended north to I-88 with funds from a new state capital projects bill.