Forest preserves on the right

Finding the best use of public lands serves the interests of both.Waubonsee Community College and the Kane County Forest Preserve District. We're glad to give a "Thumbs Up" to the idea of expanding the College's campus to make use of changes in the preserve that would make for better conservation of the area while providing WCC with space for needed expansion.

Kane and Kendall counties have some of the most beautiful and environmentally sensitive areas in the northeastern part of the state. The valley of the area, which is heavily forested with age-old trees, is heavily frequented by migrating birds and numerous species of native wildlife. It also has rich streams and rivers. Why cross at all if there's not a more direct route around the environment?

Don't count on spades

It makes no sense to devastate the area twice not to control over the stream with expressway pollutants and runoff twice, and certainly, it makes no sense to needlessly destroy hundreds of age-old trees.

Mr. Hastert's proposed outer-belt expressway will cross and devastate this area not once but twice — once in the vicinity of Henning Road and a second time in the vicinity of Big Rock. Why cross at all if there's not a more direct route around the environment?
Outer-belt poll shows support

But opponents challenge results

By Hal Dardick
Special to the Tribune

A poll that the Greater Aurora Chamber of Commerce says shows wide support for an outer beltway through Kane and Kendall Counties is providing fodder for opponents.

The poll results show nearly 60 percent of the 400 registered voters who responded favor building the outer-belt highway, while 25 percent oppose it.

The number jumps to 77 percent in favor of a state proposal to protect a corridor for the possible highway according to the poll done for the Citizens for Common Sense Transportation Planning, the chamber's ad hoc committee. Those opposed totaled 18 percent.

The chamber favors the outer-belt, or Prairie Parkway, the proposed north-south highway to connect Interstate Highways 88 and 80 in Kane, Kendall and Grundy Counties.

The poll was conducted Jan. 23 and 24 by Public Opinion Strategies, an Alexandria, Va.-based firm. It had a margin of error of 4.9 percent.

"Clearly, the vast majority of people in our area want to establish and study a corridor for the outer-belt project," chamber president Steven L. Hatcher said. "I urge our local and state leaders to listen to their constituents and move this project forward."

But Kane County Board Chairman Mike McCoy (R-Aurora) pointed to other parts of the study that showed 73 percent of the respondents were concerned about uncontrolled growth in the area.

McCoy has opposed the state's proposal for a protected corridor, saying it would destroy farmland and lead to rampant development.

"People want to relieve congestion," he said. "They don't want it as a growth corridor."

Meanwhile, Jan Strasma, chairman of Citizens Against the Sprawlway, challenged the poll, saying, it was constructed to elicit favorable responses.

Hatcher denied that.

"As far as I'm concerned, it's legit," he said. "We certainly didn't slant it in our favor."
Kane may challenge state on outer belt

County staff researches issue

By William Prosecky
Tribune staff reporter

Kane County is looking into the possibility of testing the state's authority to protect a corridor for a future outer-belt freeway, but isn't ready yet to file a legal challenge, County Board Chairman Mike McCoy (R-Aurora) said.

The Illinois Department of Transportation has the power to mark and protect a corridor for a future road on private land and "it is not considered to be a taking by the state," McCoy told more than 100 people who braved heavy snow to attend a hearing Wednesday in Kaneville Community Center.

Still, if the state doesn't show the need for such a road, the practice may be challenged, he said. The county is conducting research into the legality of corridor protection, including a decade-old ruling by Florida's Supreme Court, which overturned a state transportation corridor program similar to IDOT's, McCoy said.

Several of the more than 50 residents who spoke at the hearing said setting aside private land without a specific purpose was, at best, "un-American".

Joseph Wolf of Sugar Grove said the outer-belt highway was needed to relieve congestion, but every other speaker opposed the corridor plan, saying a beltway would destroy the small-town ambiance and fertile farmland of Kaneville.

McCoy said he wasn't certain that the Kane County Board would support a legal challenge and suggested it may be more appropriate for landowners to take on that fight if it is feasible.

The county has begun seeking additional information from IDOT in an effort to propose an alternative corridor, possibly further to the east, he said.

IDOT proposes to protect a 33-mile, 400-foot-wide corridor from Interstate Highway 88 near Kaneville to Interstate

PLEASE SEE HIGHWAY, PAGE 2
HIGHLANDS

Historic status may assist town's cause

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Highway 80 near Minooka in Grundy County. The corridor runs south for about 9 miles through southwestern Kane County and northern Kendall County, between Plano and Yorkville, before turning east to intersect with I-80.

"It's hard for us at this time to propose a solution because we haven't been told [by IDOT] or are not aware of the purpose of the road," McCoy said. "Until we know what the problem is, it's hard to assist in a solution. If we're given all the information [we need], we could help."

County Board member Jan Carlson (R-Elburn) acknowledged that an effort was "progressing" to designate as much of Kaneville as feasible a historic district.

"This is a town that ought to be preserved," said Carlson, who likened Kaneville to quaint rural villages in New England. If it got a historic-district designation, Kaneville and its surroundings would have to be treated with greater consideration by IDOT, Carlson said.

Kaneville residents vowed to oppose the state's plan.

"This is where we want to be. We don't want our way of life to change," said Myra Ottoson, who moved to Kaneville four years ago and renovated a home that dates from the 1800s. "This is very emotional for me."

"We are not strangers to opposition," said Nancy Murray, who has lived in Kaneville for 16 years and who recited a litany of projects proposed near the town that were defeated.

"We need to stand together and we need to oppose this beltway," Murray said. "It will ruin our community. It will ruin the rural areas that we have," she said.
Fence Post

Kane 'sprawlway' will accelerate the damage

Thank God for Kane County Board Chairman Mike McCoy, a man of courage and principle, who is not afraid to stand up to those who seek to profit politically and monetarily from the proposed "sprawlway" outer beltway through Kane County.

His is a voice of reason against the ignorant who spout foolishness such as, "Development is inevitable" (Richard Adorjan, spokesman for Illinois Transportation Secretary Kirk Brown and John McGovern, spokesman for U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert, as quoted in the Jan. 28 Daily Herald).

"To the contrary, development is not inevitable. Death is inevitable. Tornadoes in Illinois are inevitable. Development is the result of human choices, not of fate or forces beyond the control of sovereign people in a democratic republic!"

The statement made by spokesmen for public officials belies a lack of respect for the intelligence and free will of the people whom these politicians are supposed to be serving. The proposed outer beltway will neither protect precious farmland nor alleviate traffic. Rather, it will facilitate an increase in traffic and more building. If anyone who lives in Kane or McHenry counties needs evidence of such a phenomenon, just look at what Randall Road accomplished in a few short years!

For several years, the Daily Herald has featured many articles about school funding crises, school crowding, jail crowding, fire station response times, traffic gridlock and increases in crime. All these issues have one common source - development with rapid and dramatic population increases.

When asked to comment about the proposed outer beltway, Northern Illinois University officials recently expressed support. Isn't it interesting, then, that one of their own professors, Dr. J. Dixon Esseks, described in the Fall 2001 issue of Northern Now, an alumni magazine, as "a top-tier researcher in the fields of suburban sprawl and preservation of agricultural land" (Page 23), makes a convincing case for opposing the outer beltway with the development it would bring.

Esseks' work indicates that large-scale developments are "a burden and not a boon" (Page 23). Exclusive subdivisions create a financial burden on existing residents who must pay higher taxes for more public services to accommodate those who live in the newly created subdivisions. Esseks says, "It's a case of the poor — at least the not-wealthy — subsidizing a higher standard of living for the rich" (Page 23).

Thus, fellow citizens, development is not inevitable unless we sit back complacently and allow special interests and big-shot politicians to run roughshod over the rest of us. Each new development built means higher taxes, more traffic, more pollution, more crime and a lower quality of life for you and me.

A sprawlway outer beltway will accelerate this process of destroying the small-town and rural way of life. Make your voice heard! Tell Dennis Hastert that the only beltway he should live within is the one encircling Washington, D.C.!

Kim Preisig Elgin
Beltway is the right way to go

Seldom do we have an opportunity to be futuristic and protective in planning such as now with the Prairie Path Beltway concept.

Recently, your paper reported that there would be 198 affected property owners in a potential beltway path. I am not even going to attempt to quantify the number of people that will benefit from the planned beltway, but let's say it is two or three more than the 198 known as "the affected."

As a past co-chairman of the Kane County Landfill Site Selection Committee, I am intimately aware of passionate pleas expressed by landowners on land ownership issues. I sat through months of public testimony describing generations of bequeathments surrounding family farms. I also heard argument upon argument citing the need to remain agricultural in western Kane County. And here we are now hearing the same rhetoric on yet another matter affecting few, yet benefiting hundreds of thousands.

The "beltway does not conform to our 2020 Plan" was the reason Chairman McCoy used in denouncing Speaker Hastert's initiatives.

Having been to more than a few Kane County Development meetings as Aurora Township Highway Commissioner, I have seen family farm after family farm sold to the developer who shows up with the most cash offering instant riches. The "family farm" is then sold, annexed to a municipality, and divided for yet another new upscale subdivision. Where is "The Plan" when that happens? Chairman McCoy tells us those developments cannot be stopped because the county has no power over the municipalities. He is right, so "The Plan" is then modified to reflect the new development, and a new "NO DEVELOPMENT" firewall is established, but just a little farther west than the last firewall, and it too is drawn on "The Plan," but this time in pencil.

So you see, the "2020 Plan" is just that — a plan. There are no guarantees that development in western Kane County will not occur. There is, however, a guarantee that as development and growth in the municipalities occurs, the sprawl will be to the west, traffic congestion will be a reality, and the need for a means to handle transportation for the growth will become crucial. Without foresight and protection, the ability to develop and provide efficient transportation will be more difficult, and perhaps impossible, as we have seen in the collapse of the Route 53 corridor, the DuPage Parkway, and the North/South Expressway.

Chairman McCoy has been so concerned about Kane County traffic movement and a desire to avoid gridlock that he and KDOT Chief Jeff Dailey commissioned a Kane County Transportation Department study wherein "corridors" would be identified throughout the county and protected to assure development would not prohibit future road construction needs as the population grew and expanded — exactly what Speaker Hastert and IDOT are now attempting to do. Yet here we are with Chairman McCoy spending your tax dollars on labor and material pounding signs in the ground all over Kane County in an effort to generate unwarranted fears, thwart analytical study, logical progression, and property protection for a much needed expressway.

Wouldn't Chairman McCoy's efforts, and the wages we pay him and every county employee and board member he has enlisted to further his cause, be better spent working with Speaker Hastert and IDOT Secretary Kirk Brown to find an acceptable route? I am extremely disappointed at the lack of leadership and desire or ability to work together on this project shown by Chairman McCoy.

Speaker Hastert, in several meetings with Chairman McCoy, clearly articulated to Chairman McCoy his plans to secure a north/south expressway route, and Secretary Brown has clearly stated his intention to allow us to "put it where we want it." Relative to Speaker Hastert, Chairman McCoy's choice of location is obvious.

I would ask all those who decry the need for efficient traffic movement to please stay off I-88, I-90, I-55, I-65, I-80, and on and on, the next time you go to O'Hare, Midway, Springfield, Rockford, DeKalb, or the Quad Cities. The next time you need to go to Chicago or Indy, please use only the state routes, county roads, and local streets, for I am sure you have ample time, and no need for any high-speed route to your destination.

Chairman McCoy cries foul regarding the property development rights of 198 landowners involved in the proposed beltway centerline siting, yet he obviously sees nothing wrong with threatening to take a 228-acre farm in Rutland Township via condemnation for use as Kane County "open space." So what is it — if governmental intrusion on property development rights is for the beltway, it is wrong, but if Kane County Board Chairman McCoy wants to condemn your land for another forest preserve it is OK?

Speaker Hastert is serving as a conduit in an effort that a decades-old desire for a north/south expressway someday become a reality and provide a means for meeting efficient transportation needs for millions of people into the next century. Chairman McCoy, however, is using your tax dollars and trying his best to ensure that 198 western Kane County property owners determine what is best for you and I. Do not let the NIMBY psychology overcome sensible planning. Let's have the 198 landowners, politicians and anyone else with a vested interest at the same table for calm, open and productive dialogue without any undertones. Thanks Speaker Hastert and Secretary Brown for I, as one with more than a little knowledge regarding transportation needs, appreciate your efforts. I only hope Chairman McCoy sees the light before the truck it is on runs him over.

Ed Wilmes is a resident of Aurora.
In one of the early drafts of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson listed certain inalienable rights as "life, liberty and property."

However, opposed to slavery objected to the statement, and Jefferson later changed "property" to "the pursuit of happiness." But the fact Jefferson originally wrote it that way indicates just how fundamental the Founding Fathers considered the right to own property to be.

A modern-day property rights saga is playing itself out in western Kane County as Illinois Department of Transportation officials are proposing to identify a 400-foot-wide corridor for a future highway.

If the state chooses to accept the corridor, it will be recorded on property deeds.

"If it’s recorded, it restricts their ability to improve their property," said Jan Strasma, chairman of the opposition group Citizens Against the Sprawlway.

"In effect, there’s a cloud over that property until IDOT decides to build the road," Strasma said. "This is good until IDOT says it’s not good anymore."

Strasma said he understands property rights can take a back seat to the overall public good, but in this case, the state has not shown what good the corridor protection plan will do.

"Unfortunately, in this case, they haven’t done studies to know what the benefit is," Strasma said. "They haven’t even identified a problem."

The need for roads and bridges — the transportation infrastructure — often places property owners at odds with the government.

"For example, Kane County requests that all developers donate part of their properties to serve as right-of-way for any needed highway improvements. The request comes without any monetary compensation, a fact not lost on John Thornhill, a land development consultant. Thornhill, a retired land surveyor, takes his clients from people who are unfamiliar with the development process, seeking rezoning. He represents "people who want to do something with their land and they don’t know where to begin."

He bristles at the idea of "donating" property to the government.

"It goes back to the Constitution that you can’t take private property for public use without compensation," Thornhill said. "Beyond right-of-way donations, the government has other means of restricting property rights, he said."

"Zoning is a legitimate power of government," Thornhill concedes, but he adds, "Zoning is a limitation on someone’s property."

Kane County board member Karen Steve-McConnaughy, R-St. Charles, is in a position to see both sides of the property rights issue.

Steve-McConnaughy credits a property rights controversy for her political career.

About 14 years ago, the Kane County Forest Preserve District was set to condemn riverfront property to install bike paths.

Steve-McConnaughy was one of the owners who was set to lose land.

"Eminent domain is a powerful tool and those who have it need to respect it," she said.

"You don’t know what you’re going to need 20 years from now," she said. "The county has a responsibility to maintain a certain infrastructure. That’s what the public expects."
Citizen input crucial in government

Lawmakers need to hear public concerns

Become involved

2-27-02 Chronicle

By VICTORIA A.E. CAMRON
Kane County Chronicle

Some people gripe about the government at lunch, at work and in the privacy of their own homes.

Others take a more active approach, bringing their concerns right to the government body during public meetings.

It is a right the founding fathers deemed critical in creating a free society.

"If we can’t make a difference, then we’re no longer a government of the people,” said Marvel Davis of Big Rock Township.

The issue that brings the most people out to Kane County Board meetings is zoning or land use, board Chairman Mike McCoy said.

“That seems to be the most prevalent type of speaker we get at the county board,” McCoy said. During the 10 years he’s been on the county board, the county has seen a lot of growth, so there has been a large variety of speakers on the subject, he said.

“I feel we have pretty active citizens in Kane County,” McCoy said. His words were backed up by the attendance of more than 100 people at a meeting about the proposed outer beltway at the end of January.

Davis is one resident who’s made her opposition to that road well-known. Previously, she attended meetings regarding a possible roadway in Kendall County.

“I saw the race track as a good way of eating up 1,000 acres of farmland,” Davis said. She did not get as involved in that issue because her property ends about a mile and a half from the Kendall County border, Davis said.

The speedway was built in Joliet instead.

While she’s impressed with the Kane County Board’s actions to protect farmland, Davis said, she is hoping more people will care about the issue.

“All I can do is speak out as honestly as I know how to speak out and hope others will follow that view,” Davis said.

When they are presented well, citizens’ comments can be effective.

“Their input does effect change,” McCoy said. “We try to listen to all the citizens.”

During a recent debate over widening Orchard Road near Aurora, one resident took a unique approach to convincing board members the road already was too close to her house: She invited them to her house and held a meeting in her backyard.

After the board members heard the traffic noise, they changed their plans, McCoy said. Now, the road will be expanded the other direction, away from the residences.

While such an extreme measure is not always necessary, public officials suggest speakers keep to their point and remain polite.

“People of good intentions can have honest disagreements,” said Ric Manser, a Campton Township trustee. “Anybody who comes to the township meeting and gets up and calmly presents their case will at least get a fair hearing.”

Speaking at a meeting can be more effective than sending a letter, officials agreed.

“A good in-person performance before the board is more effective than a letter,” McCoy said.

“From my standpoint, you might be able to get more press because reporters are at meetings,” Manser said. However, he suggested sending a letter in advance, so the board members may be able to research the issue you are speaking on.
State warns Kane against moving expressway route

But county insists its study will be worthwhile

BY DAVID R. ZAK
Daily Herald Staff Writer

Any alternatives to the proposed expressway corridor running through western Kane County better steer clear of affecting homes or the environment, a spokesman for Illinois Transportation Secretary Kirk Brown said Friday.

That admonition came as Kane County officials gear up for a high-powered meeting with Kendall County officials and leaders of Aurora, Sugar Grove, Montgomery and Big Rock — the towns most affected by the state's current outer-belt expressway corridor proposal.

That proposal, if adopted, would set aside a 400-foot-wide, 33-mile-long strip of land as the site of a future expressway linking I-80 near Minooka in Grundy County with I-88 in Kane County near Kaneville.

Nine miles of the corridor's northern route would cut through undeveloped Kane County farmland. In an area officials and residents have vowed to keep free from development.

Illinois Department of Transportation officials have said the corridor as proposed is the preferred route. Still, Kane County officials have taken it upon themselves to study whether a route farther east, closer to Aurora, would be better.

Though results of that study will be presented at Thursday's meeting, comments made Friday by IDOT spokesman Richard Adorjan raised questions about whether Kane leaders are wasting their time.

"We don't want to see a significant increase in the number of homes or businesses that would need to be relocated," Adorjan said. "But we know there's difficulty in crossing the Fox River."

"This is an area where we're studying is an area of projected traffic congestion," he said. "It's not a site for an outer belt. It's certainly an area we need to deal with on a regional level anyway. I don't think it's a waste of time," she said.

"We don't want to see the state choose the location it did because it's the path of least resistance," said Kane County Board Member Karen Steve-McConnaughey, a St. Charles Republican and chairwoman of the county's transportation committee.

"The concerns (Adorjan) are talking about are the same concerns we have," she said. "We want to look at all those same issues and draw our own conclusions."

But if IDOT rejects Kane's alternatives, McConnaughey said, their work wouldn't be for naught.

"I can't predict if they'll listen to us, but I can say the area we're studying is an area of projected traffic congestion," she said. "It's not a site for an outer belt. It's certainly an area we need to deal with on a regional level anyway."

"We don't think this is a waste of time," she said.

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Concerned about parkway

To the Editor:

We the people...

I was under the impression that this country was founded under the principle of democracy, by what the majority of the people wanted.

Yet, when it comes to the "Prairie Parkway" issue I am tending to believe otherwise.

When the "Prairie Parkway" issue was first presented to the public in Yorkville (strategically during the holidays) people were given little time to respond to the idea. It was felt by many that this project was being pushed through too quickly—almost like it being shoved down our throats. The majority of the people there had nothing good to say about the proposed "outer belt" expressway.

We were told that it wouldn't even take place for 10 to 20 years because there was no money available to fund this project. Yet, just recently $15 million dollars mysteriously appeared to help fund the project.

As I listened at this meeting—and at the meeting about the Eldamain Road—people stated they wanted neither of these roads built. They want the rural atmosphere they cherish left alone.

Farmers do not want their fields covered over with concrete. Some of these farms have been in their families for generations.

People who moved from the city to this area do not want the congestion and noise pollution that was in their previous urban settings.

Even recently, headlines state that the public backs the "outer belt." However, from reading the article, it appears many of the questions asked were misleading. Of the 400 respondents who answered, I wonder how many actually knew what the "Prairie Parkway" is.

Of course, everyone wants to alleviate traffic congestion. However, the main congestion is in and near the city areas, not in the country.

The article stated that the majority of people would support a "beltway" if it helped farmers and businesses ship their goods in an easier manner. How helpful will the "Prairie Parkway" be when farms are divided by a four lane road and the farmers are forced to drive their farm equipment many unnecessary miles to get to an overpass to simply get from one side of their farm to the other?

Just whom is this "outer belt" going to benefit? Maybe it will benefit the people wanting to travel from the Rockford area to the proposed Peotone Airport.

Since the "belt way" is supposed to be limited access, it will not relieve any of the traffic congestion in Kendall County and eastward. It will only bring more congestion out westward. Why spend hundreds of millions of dollars on a new beltway when the roads we have are in dire need of repairs?

I have heard that Route 23 has a centerline already drawn up which could connect Rockford to Route 80. In addition, it was mentioned that Ridge Road has a centerline. On the other hand, Route 47, which already runs north and south and connects to Route 80, could help alleviate traffic by making it four lanes.

Surely, there must be other alternatives that could be better researched to serve the traffic problems we currently have.

We need to protect the agricultural centers of our counties and put the road near the development in the eastern part of the county, where it really makes sense since that is where traffic congestion is.

I hope and pray that IDOT and our public politicians listen to what the majority of the people are really saying about the proposed beltway project. They need to remember that they serve us, the public. Right now, I feel the majority of people are against the site of the proposed "Prairie Parkway."

Please write or call your local elected officials NOW expressing your concerns regarding this issue before it is too late.

Dave Braden
Newark

Our letters policy

The Kane County Chronicle encourages letters to the editor, especially on local issues.

For clarity, please submit letters typewritten, double-spaced, and limited to 400 words. Letters should be signed and include the author's address and telephone number for verification purposes. Anonymous letters will not be printed. The newspaper reserves the right to edit all submissions.

Address: Letters to the Editor, 1000 Randall Road, Geneva, IL 60134

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McCoy taking cheap shots at Hastert

Dennis Hastert is one of the most powerful men in the world. His quiet and unassuming demeanor hides a shrewd and thoughtful man whose ascension is not marked by the bodies he stepped over but the people he has helped.

As a member of the U.S. House, Hastert has never lost touch with his constituency. He returns home often, talks to people in his district constantly and has tirelessly and faithfully represented the best interests of his district.

The baleful on Illinois 25 and West Bartlett Road has not been built because of Dennis Hastert. He brought federal money to build the Orchard Road extension across the Fox River in Oswego. He will bring federal money to build other bridges across the Fox River, if the county leadership ever agree on where to site them. "The county studied nine different sites," Hastert observed in an editorial board meeting last week. "A lot of the money available was spent on engineering studies, and a lot of time has elapsed as the county narrowed the list to a few choices. We probably could have had one built by now but when they decide whether it's going to be Stearns Road or Bolz Road or wherever, I'll be there to help them get the money."

As speaker of the House, Hastert enjoys national prominence. Known for his ability to move legislation forward and build a consensus to get bills passed that help the American people, Hastert's record is admired on both sides of the House floor. His low-profile style contrasts sharply with past speakers such as Newt Gingrich, whose abrasive, self-destructive megalomania politicized every bill and paralyzed legislation. Hastert the Enabler has helped move tax cuts, debt repayment, a stimulus package and other seemingly impossible bills through the House without the high profile rancor that typifies a Tom Daschle-led Senate.

Hastert's very presence in key House races across the country helped sway elections to the Republican candidates and helped them keep their tenuous majority. Hastert not only has a respectful and collegial working relationship with President George W. Bush, but also had the ability and dexterity to work closely with Democratic President Bill Clinton.

He has traveled the world, meeting with international leaders in deep and compelling discussions that shape the world. He has inside knowledge of foiled terrorist attacks on U.S. soil and is in the first circle of those who will shape the continuing U.S. response to terrorism.

In fact, he's able to forge a consensus everywhere, it would seem, but right here in Kane County. While national leaders intuit the need to work closely with one of the most influential men in America, Kane County Board Chairman Mike McCoy seems blissfully unaware.

Hastert, who proposed an outer belt freeway many years ago, is on record as favoring the proposal from the Illinois Department of Transportation for a route west of Route 47. He correctly observes that development has already begun east of Route 47 and thus property acquisition would be expensive and disruptive. Hastert also sees a natural tie-in of the outer belt from I-80 all the way to I-90 on the north and reasons that a roadway in that location would save western Kane County from the unbearable congestion of another Route 59. His position is bolstered by his own polls that show 80 percent of the residents favor that idea.

McCoy, however, clings to the county's plan which calls for the outer belt to be sited east of Route 47 and a large open space to the west. That dissonance in and of itself is not troubling were it constructive. But it is not. McCoy refuses to reason with Hastert to find the best possible solution and has led the County Board to directly oppose him. He is bitter and abrupt to those who do not fully embrace his vision of the eastern route for the outer belt, including Hastert himself.

McCoy is apparently not content to defy the congressman in his own district, but has embarked on the decidedly ill-advised course of embarrassing him as well.

The speaker said this week that McCoy has complained to Hastert of this roadway as his legacy. One might snicker at that notion and reason that a man who has dined with presidents and kings does not view a roadway as much of a legacy, though a whiny county politician might. And according to Hastert's aides, McCoy further implied that Hastert does not get his way, he will hold federal bridge money. What's absent is any precedent or justification for such an egregious accusation.

McCoy, who apparently projects his own petty vindictiveness onto Hastert, would seem mad as a hatter to insult the most powerful congressman in America who has worked tirelessly and faithfully for his district:

That, it would seem, would be a fitting legacy for him.

Mike Bailey is managing editor of the Courier News in Elgin.
House speaker downplays feud

Hastert, McCoy vow to cooperate despite expressway disagreement

BY DAVID R. KAZAK
Daily Herald Staff Writer

If U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert is upset with Kane County Board Chairman Mike McCoy over their differing opinions about the proposed outer-belt expressway, you wouldn't know it from hearing him speak Monday.

"I've always gotten along with Mike McCoy," Hastert said during a meeting with the Daily Herald's editorial board.

That answer came in response to a question that recounted McCoy's claim that Hastert used "smear-ate" tactics to garner McCoy's support for the outer-belt expressway, or if McCoy remained opposed — his silence.

To be sure, Hastert wasn't shy Monday about his view on the state's controversial proposal to record a 53-mile-long corridor of land between I-80 and I-88 that eventually would be home to the so-called Prairie Parkway.

What's raised the ire of expressway opponents, including McCoy, is the Illinois Department of Transportation's plan to place that 400-foot-wide corridor through nine miles of undeveloped farmland in southwestern Kane County.

McCoy and others want to keep that area, which includes Big Rock and Rand antownships, free from development during the next two decades and beyond. Hastert, however, said development is inevitable, as is the need for the expressway.

"The right thing to do, in my mind, is to find that centerline," Hastert said. Despite his difference with McCoy, Hastert downplayed talk of bad blood between the two.

"McCoy disagrees with me," he said. "But there's other things we have to work together on and do for the good of the people of Kane County.

"The more we work together, the more benefit there is for the constituents," Hastert said. "I hold no ill will toward (McCoy). It's just too bad we don't agree on this thing.

"In the long term, what I'm trying

See FEUD on PAGE 4
Feud: McCoy pledges his opposition to outer belt

Continued from Page 1

to do is right," he said.
McCoy, who met with Hastert at a Kane County Republican Party function on Monday, also backed away from the criticism he’s lobbed in recent weeks toward Hastert.
"We’ve never seen eye-to-eye on the outer-belt issue, but we have to be able to find some common ground," McCoy said. The meeting was the first between McCoy and Hastert since the outer-belt debate heated up in December, which is when IDOT first announced its corridor protection plan.
"It was nice to see him like that," McCoy said. "It was kind of good to cool the jets a little.
"The truth is, we have always gotten along well," he added. "This is the only issue we’ve had any kind of conflict on."
McCoy said no matter what, he remains opposed to IDOT’s plan to record the corridor in western Kane. On Thursday, he and other Kane County officials will make a presentation to state and local officials on an alternative route for the expressway east of Route 47, a route McCoy said had "advantages" over the IDOT’s proposed route, which would connect with I-88 west of Route 47 near Kaneville.
Hastert touches his bases
Speaker to IDOT: Use sense in siting outer belt

By Dave Parro
STAFF WRITER

AURORA—A letter from U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert to state transportation officials makes general, "common-sense" suggestions regarding the path of the proposed Prairie Parkway, without addressing a specific centerline.

Addressing Illinois Transportation Secretary Kirk Brown, Hastert reiterates his support for the 35-mile corridor — connecting interstates 88 and 80 through Kane and Kendall counties.

The letter, dated Feb. 7 and released Thursday, acknowledges that the proposed 40-foot-wide right of way "directly interrupts farm and residential property lines" in some instances.

"Hastert said it makes "good sense," where practical, to site the corridor along existing property lines."

"I believe that such an action will help mitigate the obvious and negative impact of breaking up affected properties," the letter reads.

While there are scientific reasons to site the outer-belt highway in a particular place,

DONELL COLLINS/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Hastert interview touches on a wide range of topics, A3

Hastert said, "common sense dictates" that property lines should be respected.

In an interview with The Beacon News editorial board Thursday morning, Hastert said planners should take the path of least interruption where possible. In addition to following property lines, Hastert said, engineers might consider using power-line routes to avoid cutting property into pieces.

"After listening and reading some of the concerns out there, I think there are some things that can be done," he said.

Hastert said he wanted to release the letter until after the public-comment period, which concluded Feb. 10, because he wanted discussion and reaction to

OUTER BELT
From page A1

"Take this process of protest and concerns play out — that's what this period was designed for," he said.

The speaker said he has intentionally avoided making any specific highway alignment recommendations because that would be left up to the state.

When asked about the feasibility of an eastern corridor, which some Kane and Kendall officials have been pushing, Hastert said it would likely be more difficult because of higher development. The eastern corridor generally runs east of Route 47, starting in the area between Aurora and Sugar Grove.

"However, if planners find a route that does not affect a large number of people, Hastert said, the eastern route could be an option."

"If that's what they decide to do, and the what's what causes the least interruption to people's lives, then that's what they could do," he said.

The route most discussed by the Illinois Department of Transportation runs through western Kane and Kendall counties. A far western alternative goes from the Kendall-DeKalb county line before cutting back east through southern Kendall.

While acknowledging that some property owners would be harmed wherever the road is built, Hastert said in his letter to the IDOT that a north-south route through his congressional district is "crucial to the future economic viability" of the area.

As the corridor has been proposed, some of Hastert's personal friends would lose property to the road.

"None of this can even be impossible to site a corridor as growth moves west."

"It's a painful thing," Hastert said, "and, quite frankly, if I were going to be political and please everyone, I wouldn't have even raised the issue."

Hastert has already secured $15 million for a Phase 1 study for the highway, but, he said, he has no plans to push for the project to be included in the 2005 federal transportation bill. He said there's no need for it now, because "I'll never even see this road built myself."

The speaker said he supports the eventual second leg of the road, which would connect interstate 88 to 190 to the north.
Hastert emphasizes outer-belt support

By William Precky

WILLIAM PRECKY

Hastert said he is backing DuPage County State's Atty. Joseph Birkett in his Republican run for attorney general.

Hastert said Birkett “is head and shoulders above” his competition for the nomination. He cited Birkett’s legislative expertise, including laws that increased the penalties for drunk driving and enhanced the penalties for criminals convicted of dealing ecstasy or similar club drugs. Birkett said he was “truly honored and humbled to have the support.”

Also, DuPage County Board Chairman Robert Schillerstrom is backing Yukanda Campuzano for an open seat on the board, representing District 11 in northeastern DuPage. That’s unique because other than Campuzano—Schillerstrom is endorsing only incumbent.

Schillerstrom has, however, overlooked one contender: Alice Peterson (R-Woodridge), who is running against three other incumbents for the County Board’s District 3. Schillerstrom and Peterson have held some run-ins over the years, but the biggest reason for his decision is that the three candidates Peterson is running against—Michael McMahon, Kyle Gilis and Tom Bennigsen—are loyal Schillerstrom supporters. In fact, Schillerstrom appointed McMahon and Gilis to the board.

Speaking of (fee) Hastert: Former Illinois Republicans Party Chair Bradley Hahn has signed on as district press secretary for Hastert in the Yorkville Republican's office in Batavia. The 25-year-old Hahn hails from DeKalb. In addition to working for the state GOP, his news reporting background includes stints with the South Florida Sun-Sentinel, as well as the Daily Herald and Courier News locally. He interned in the Tribune's Washington bureau in 1999.

Auditor finds cash: Though DuPage County Auditor Jim Raske was one of the few county officials not up for re-election this year, that hasn't stopped him from promoting his works in office.

This week, Raske issued a press release to tout the fact that he tracked down $5,000 in cable television franchise fees.

The television providers were the checks to DuPage County and the checks were cashed.

But a problem arose in the dating out of the money. Instead of going to DuPage, the money landed in the bank account of Will County. Raske isn't sure how the mix-up occurred, but he is happy that Will County confirmed the problem and fired the checks to DuPage.

Democrat leading town: Bloomington Democrat Rosie Wright, who has run several spirited, yet unsuccessful, campaigns for county office, is leaving the Chicago area due to an illness in her family.

In a recent letter to friends and supporters, Wright said her husband, Chris, needs a "warmer climate, and I cannot stand in the way of his health and comfort at this stage in his life."
Hastert: Don't split up farms for outer belt

By David R. Kazak
Daily Herald Staff Writer

Any corridor for a proposed outer-belt expressway should avoid slicing through the middle of private property and instead follow property boundaries and existing rights-of-way, U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert said Thursday.

"They went down the middle of farms," Hastert said, speaking of a controversial Illinois Department of Transportation proposal to designate a 400-foot-wide, 33-mile-long strip of land in Kane and Kendall counties as a corridor for a future expressway.

Earlier this month, in a letter to Illinois Transportation Director Kirk Brown, Hastert offered what he called a "suggestion" that the corridor follow the existing property boundaries and rights-of-way for utilities, such as power lines.

When the corridor first was announced in December, Hastert - a long-time supporter of an expressway in Kane and Kendall counties - became a target for criticism.

One reason was because the tentative corridor cuts through the heart of farms and could hurt a farmer's ability to work the land efficiently. However, Hastert has steered clear of the debate because, he said, the state is responsible for deciding the roadway's specific location.

Other arguments against the proposed corridor, which slices a path between I-80 in Grundy County north to I-88 in Kane County, is that it cuts through land Kane County officials, including Board Chairman Mike McCoy, have vowed to protect from development.

Addressing the controversy over the corridor's path through the middle of farms, Hastert declined to blame the state road designers responsible for drawing the line on the map.

"I think what they tried to do was put in the least intrusive route," he said. "But whenever you go, you're going to be in someone's back yard. So overall, I think they've done a good job."

In his Feb. 7 letter to Brown, Hastert asked the director to "site the corridor along existing section and property lines.

"While there may be sound scientific reasons regarding the specific siting of the proposed corridor, common sense dictates that, where possible, existing boundary lines should be respected," Hastert wrote. Hastert said Brown has yet to respond to his letter.

Brown's spokesman, Richard Ahler, said Brown received the letter but hasn't decided yet how best to respond.

If IDOT decides to record the corridor on the deeds of property owners in its path, Brown will be the one to make that decision.

If approved and funded, actual construction of the so-called Prairie Parkway could happen 10 or 15 years from now, officials have said.

After reading Hastert's letter, McCoy said he's encouraged that the Speaker wants the corridor to be less intrusive.

"I'm glad he's not tied to that specific alignment," he said. "I'm glad (Hastert) is reacting to the farm community.

"I truly feel there's now some flexibility when it comes to moving that route, that things are starting to work out," he said.

Steve Arnold, spokesman for the Kane County Farm Bureau, said even though Hastert is concerned about splitting up farms, IDOT has yet to make clear whether the proposed route, which slices through 9 miles of undeveloped Kane County farmland, is the best one.

"To say I am encouraged (by Hastert's position) would be to infer that we believe IDOT has chosen the right corridor," Arnold said. "We don't think they've given us enough information to make that decision."

Overall, Hastert said he supports IDOT's selection of western Kane County as home to the future expressway, mainly because it's away from the heavier population farther east.

"They've talked about moving that corridor closer between Route 47 and the Fox River, but you could never do that today," he said. "You could never get it sited.

"If we don't do this now, we'll lose an opportunity we'll never have again."

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Letter: McCoy says stance is encouraging

Continued from Page 1

See LETTER on PAGE 11
Hastert emphasized his support for the north-south highway and his desire to remain out of the process for siting the corridor. “Nonetheless, it has come to my attention that the proposed corridor, in some instances, directly interrupts farm and residential property lines,” Hastert said. “Therefore, it makes good sense, to the extent practical, to site the proposed corridor along existing section and property lines.”

The outer beltway would be a 33-mile highway connecting I-88 to I-80.

A northern leg of the beltway, running from I-88 to I-90, is not included in the corridor protection program that IDOT is now implementing.

Hastert spokesman Brad Hahn said the recent public hearings on the beltway had brought to Hastert’s attention the issue of the highway running directly through properties.

“The speaker has no interest in getting involved in the specific siting,” Hahn said.

Hastert simply wants the state to designate a route that will be “the least disruptive,” to property owners, Hahn said.

In his letter to the state transportation secretary, Hastert said that following property lines might prove difficult, but would lessen the roadway’s effect on surrounding areas. “I believe that such an action will help mitigate the obvious and negative impact of breaking up affected properties,” Hastert wrote. “In short, while there may be sound scientific reasons regarding the specific siting of the proposed corridor, common sense dictates that, where possible, existing boundary lines should be respected.”

Richard Adorjan, a spokesman for IDOT, said Brown has not yet responded to Hastert’s letter.

In a meeting with the Kane County Chronicle editorial board earlier this week, Hastert said that he generally supports the corridor selected by IDOT, but believes the agency’s engineers need to be more sensitive to property owners when designating the precise route.
Our Viewpoint

Beltway options a good start

County officials should be commended for this first step. However, next week's meeting and the following discussions must be serious and not become political window dressing.

County officials will meet next week to consider a Prairie Parkway alternative that would be east of Route 47. It is the first significant step county officials have undertaken after opposing the potential outer beltway corridor.

County officials should be commended for this first step. However, next week's meeting and the following discussions must be serious and not become political window dressing.

State transportation officials want to build a freeway connecting Interstate 90 with Interstate 80. Officials first are working on the leg from Interstate 88 south to I-80. The tentative corridor would be west of Route 47 and would be near Kaneville.

The corridor must be identified and preserved now so that the least amount of disruption to families occurs when the road is built in 10 to 15 years. Doing so will save the money in the long run and avoid the pitfalls that doomed previous attempts to build this road.

State officials already have rejected any corridor east of Route 47, and U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Yorkville, has said there is not enough open space east of Route 47 to make it a viable option.

County officials have identified Route 47 as a demarcation line in hopes of preserving the open space and farmland that make up the western half of the county. Critics of the state-identified transportation corridor also have said the roadway conflicts with the county's 2020 Land Resource Management Plan.

On the surface, it seems unlikely a corridor east of Route 47 is viable. It is possible that Hastert and state transportation officials are wrong when they say there already has been too much growth east of Route 47 to accommodate such a road. Nevertheless, state officials sought input and the county is complying.

It would be easy for officials to investigate potential corridors east of Route 47 as a way to bolster their opposition to a route farther west. Such a study also would provide cover for concerned voters opposed to a route over any highway.

In studying an eastern corridor, county officials will encounter some of the same opposition as has been identified with the state's corridor, that primarily being that few people want to live near such a road and fewer want the route tied to their deeds and potentially affect property values.

An outer beltway is needed. Growth will occur with or without the road. County officials should be commended for their own research but must ensure the study truly addresses the transportation problem, not the political one.
Hastert set to comment on outer belt

Message to IDOT:
House speaker will recommend corridor along property lines

By Dave Parro

The Prairie Parkway's leading backer plans to release a letter today, asking the state to be more considerate of property lines when recording a centerline for the 33-mile proposed highway.

U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert,

Hastert seems the outer-belt road instead could run down parcel lines and do minimal damage, Hahn said.

Many residents, especially farmers, already have complained that the corridor in western Kane and Kendall counties leaves them with unusable parcels of property that will be inaccessible when the road is built.

The letter will mark Hastert's first official public response to the road since a public hearing Dec. 11.

Residents at a number of public meetings held since then have called for the speaker's involvement in the public information process.

Hastert has supported the concept of an outer-belt since 1988, when he was a state representative, and he already has secured $15 million in federal funds for a Phase I study of the highway.
Most really don’t want outer belt

I was under the impression that this country was founded under the principle of democracy by what the majority of the people wanted. Yet, when it comes to the "Prairie Parkway" issue, I am tending to believe otherwise.

When the parkway issue was first presented to the public in Yorkville, strategically between the holidays, people were given little time to respond to the idea. It was felt by many that this project was being pushed throughout quite quickly, almost like being shoved down our throats. The majority of the people there had nothing good to say about the proposed "outer belt" expressway. We were told that it wouldn't even take place for 10 to 20 years because there was no money available to fund this project.

Yet, just recently, $15 million mysteriously appeared to help fund the project.

As I listened at this meeting and at the meeting about the Eldamin Road, people stated they wanted neither of these roads built. They wanted the rural atmosphere they cherished left alone. Farmers did not want their fields covered over with concrete. Some of these farms have been in their families for generations. People who moved from the city to this area did not want the congestion and noise pollution that was available to them in their urban settings.

Even recently in the Beacon News, the front page headline stated the public backs the "outer belt". However, from reading the article, it appears many of the questions asked were misleading. Of the 400 respondents who answered, I wonder how many actually knew what the "Prairie Parkway" is. Of course, everyone wants to alleviate traffic congestion. However, the main congestion is near the cities, not in the country. The article stated that the majority of people would support a "beltway" if it helped farmers and businesses ship their goods in an easier manner. How helpful will the "Prairie Parkway" be when farms are divided by a four-lane road and the farmers are forced to drive their farm equipment many unnecessary miles to get to an overpass to simply get from one side of their farm to the other?

Just who is this "outer belt" going to benefit? Maybe it will benefit the people wanting to travel from the Rockford area to the proposed Peotone Airport. Since the beltway is supposed to be limited access, it will not relieve any of the traffic congestion in Kendall County and eastward. It will only bring more congestion out westward.

Why spend hundreds of millions of dollars on a new beltway when the roads we have are in dire need of repairs? I have heard that Route 23 has a centerline already drawn up which could connect Rockford to Route 80. In addition, it was mentioned that Ridge Road has a centerline. On the other hand, Route 47, which already runs north and south and connects to Route 80, could help alleviate traffic by making it four lanes.

Surely, there must be other alternatives that could be better researched to serve the traffic problems we currently have. We need to protect the agricultural centers of our counties and put the road near the development in the eastern part of the county where it really makes sense since that is where traffic congestion is. I hope and pray that IDOT and our public politicians listen to what the majority of the people are really saying about the proposed beltway project. They need to remember that they serve us, the public. Right now, I feel the majority of people are against the site of the proposed "Prairie Parkway."

Please write or call your local elected officials now expressing your concerns regarding this issue before it is too late.

Dave Braden is a resident of Newark.
Beltway poses tough questions

Mark Foster

U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert makes an argument that sounds pretty logical and seems to be supported by history.

If the state doesn't establish a centerline for a north-south highway in western Kane County now and protect the corridor from development, continued residential and commercial growth will make it impossible to designate a route later, and the result will be the same sort of traffic problems prevalent in DuPage County.

The road system in northeastern Illinois developed like the spokes on a wheel, radiating out from the center of Chicago. It was only later, and often too late, that any thought was given to constructing north-south highways.

Hastert points to the long-abandoned Fox Valley Freeway plan, which would have been routed along the Kane-DuPage county line. Planners tried to designate a corridor, and discovered that there was already too many homes, shops, offices and factories in the way to ever find a route that would have been either politically or financially feasible.

The outer beltway would link the Northwest Tollway on the north with Interstate 80 on the south. It would run through western Kane County south into Kendall County, curving southeast before linking up with I-80. Right now, the Illinois Department of Transportation is looking at the southern leg of the beltway, from the East-West Tollway to I-80.

The Kane County Board has its 2020 land use plan, which designates the eastern townships along the river an essentially urban corridor, the central townships as the place where development will be accommodated but controlled, and the western townships as the place where development will be restricted and farmland preserved.

Kane County Board Chairman Mike McCoy is opposing the beltway, at least as proposed west of Route 47, on the basis of the 2020 plan.

Hastert contends that 2020 plan or not, development is moving west and that it is unrealistic not to plan for a major north-south highway.

Of course, the argument could be made that construction of a major new highway in western Kane County will on its own spur new development along its path, destroying the intent of the county's plan.

If the beltway were to be constructed, it would be up to the county board to exert the political will to refuse requests for zoning changes and for development proposals.

History indicates that the county board would not be able to exercise such control. One only need to look at Randall Road, a county highway which past county leaders said would be the county's prime north-south transportation route, and for that reason would have limited curb cuts.

Development pressures resulted in the county government authorizing all sorts of curb cuts on Randall. With each passing day, Randall Road becomes less a high-speed transportation route and more a commercial thoroughfare.

If the beltway were constructed in Kane County there certainly would be interchanges at the Northwest Tollway, Illinois Route 72, Illinois Route 64, Illinois Route 38, the East-West Tollway and U.S. Route 30.

The pressure for development would start first around those interchanges, and ultimately would extend along the entire corridor, in turn creating demand for new interchanges to provide access to the new developments.

In other words, it could be argued that the development Hastert says is heading west will be fueled by the highway.

It's a tough call. Say no to the beltway, and we take the risk that development occurs anyway, and that we end up with a traffic mess. Say yes to the beltway, and we could end up with even more development, and traffic still might be a mess.

The real question is whether a beltway could be constructed through western Kane County while resisting development pressure. Hastert and McCoy need to get together to provide an answer.

Mark Foster is the Kane County Chronicle News Editor and may be reached by calling (630) 845-5362 or e-mailing m foster@kcchronicle.com.
Photo Poll

Q: Do you support the concept of an outerbeltway plan?

"Yes. We've got too much growth already. This won't make much of a difference."
Ed Foster, Geneva

"Yes, it's long overdue."
Randy Wennlund, St. Charles

"I'm not familiar with the issue."
Janice Hill, Lily Lake

"I would rather not support it. It will bring in more boom."
Gieda Afdal, St. Charles

"I don't really know. I just moved out here."
Blair Woodbury, St. Charles

"Yes, if we don't secure the land now, we'll be in trouble later."
Colleen Lang, St. Charles

Poll was conducted at the St. Charles Post Office

St. Charles kindergarten registration is March 6

ST. CHARLES — Kindergarten registration for District 303 students is scheduled for 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesday, March 6 at all district elementary schools.

Children must be 5 years old on or before Sept. 1, 2002 to be eligible.

Families must provide a birth certificate and two documents as proof of residency.

Referendum video makes the rounds

GENEVA — “Spring has sprung and grass has rise. I wonder where my alderman is.”

With apologies to Ogden Nash, First Ward Alderman Chuck Brown waxed poetic following a little dust-up during a recent Geneva City Council meeting.

Brown was concerned that the city’s video steps over the line from information to advocacy.

Brown said he was looking for more help from the city in developing an information campaign.

Eye on Geneva

Brenda Schory

Emergency Dispatch moves out as planned, there would be enough space for police and fire to share the current downtown location.

In any case, Brown said he doesn’t represent the only opposition to the measure.

A number of citizens who have talked to me said they don’t support it either,” Brown said. “Personally I see the need to pass it. I was a little closer than Prairie Green which was a landslide. And I hope some fellow alderman who appears to be against it will add a little support to my stance.

Eye on Geneva

Feb. 27, Geneva Friendly Seniors, Geneva Park District, 710 Western Ave.

7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 28, at Fire Station 2, 2532 Fargo Blvd.

Geneva Community High School students collected was $3,211.01 in coins recently to assist in the experimental cancer treatment for English teacher Victoria Landberg.

Senior Kyle Donahue suggested the coin drive during spirit week activities.

Students at Western
County to seek alternative to Beltway

By TOM SCHLUETER
Kane County Chronicle

GENEVA — Members of two Kane County committees will meet next week to discuss an alternate route for the proposed outer beltway.

The Development and Transportation committees will gather at 9 a.m. Wednesday in the Auditorium in Building A of the government center to listen to the pros and cons of the eastern corridor for the Prairie Parkway.

Officials from Aurora, Montgomery, Sugar Grove and Kendall County are expected to attend.

The special meeting comes as a result of the county board's official stance opposing the corridor west of Route 47. The so-called eastern corridor is east of Route 47 and would make use of Route 55.

"The study area east of Route 47 is identified in the county's 2020 Transportation Plan, written in 1995," said development department director Phil Bus.

The Illinois Department of Transportation considered three possible routes for its corridor protection plan. The eastern route, the central route and western route, which would be in DeKalb County.

IDOT officials have said they chose to protect the central corridor because the western route is too far from the general population, while the eastern route already has too much development in its path.

U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert said in an interview with the Chronicle Monday that it is too late to build a highway between Randall Road and Route 47.

"Today it's not feasible. You can't do it," Hastert said.

But in a Jan. 9 vote, the board supported the route east of Route 47.

County Board Chairman Mike McCoy has come under pressure for his vocal opposition of IDOT's preferred corridor, which runs from Interstate 88 near Kaneville to I-80 near Minooka.

"I'm still against it," McCoy said Tuesday. "It's a bad alignment."

One reason for McCoy's opposition, and the impetus for next week's special meeting, is the possibility the eastern corridor could provide relief for current traffic congestion.

McCoy has been criticized for his beltway opposition for fear Hastert would retaliate politically.

Hastert said that, like McCoy, he represents Kane County and denied he would take retribution against its citizens.

McCoy said comments about Hastert punishing Kane County for his actions have come from board members, not from him.

"I have always said he wouldn't take political retribution," McCoy said.

Elburn home nominated for historic registry

By TOM SCHLUETER
Kane County Chronicle

GENEVA — An 1876 farmhouse in Blackberry Township will be nominated to the Kane County Register of Historic Places.

The property, known as the Hinds Farmstead on Main Street near Elburn, was deteriorating until new owners bought and rehabilitated it last year, said Kane County preservation planner Julia Evans.

"The building had been neglected and was in bad repair," Evans told members of the Development Committee Tuesday.

The committee approved the historic nomination. The measure will go before the full county board at its March meeting.

The Hinds house was built around 1876 by a Mr. Armstrong in the Italianate style and features a cupola on top.

Although the house had fallen into disrepair, it remained structurally and architecturally intact, Evans said.

Including in the nomination are the farm's out buildings — including the original outbuilding. The property contains three barns, one built between 1860 and 1880, and twin barns connected by a silo built between 1890 and 1900.

The Armstrongs sold the land to Wheeler C. Hinds in 1889, and it stayed in the Hinds family until it was sold to the current owner to settle the estate last year. The land was farmed until 1999.
We don’t want it or need it

To the Editor:

To our neighbors in Yorkville, Sugar Grove and Aurora Township who support the “Prairie Parkway,”

Your towns are committed to development. Your resolutions in support of the Outer Belt are transparent efforts at sleight-of-hand. You are saying, “Build it for our benefit, but don’t put it in our front yard.”

Those of us who live in Kaneville and Big Rock, those of us to whom you would push off all the noise, dirt, congestion and added development of this highway - we say to you:

We don’t want this highway, and we don’t need it. You say you do.

If you want development in your towns, then YOU must live in the midst of the highway, and noise and congestion that will surround this road. If you truly support this road and development, then let it be in the eastern corridor.

If the purpose of the road is to relieve congestion, then build it in the congested areas. Our townships - Kaneville and Big Rock - are not congested, and that is because we are committed to preserving the rural landscape and preventing our farm and prairie resources here at home.

Our land is not vacant. It is in use, feeding a larger population far beyond the Fox Valley.

Building this unnecessary road in this path will destroy a non-renewable resource, some of the best farmland in the world.

If you support the “Prairie Parkway,” live with it in your own front yard.

Joann Murdock
Lee Murdock
Kaneville

Our letters policy

The Kane County Chronicle encourages letters to the editor, especially on local issues.

For clarity, please submit letters typewritten, double-spaced and limited to 400 words. Letters should be signed and include the author’s address and telephone number for verification purposes.

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Fax letters: (630) 232-4962

E-Mail: editorial@kccchronicle.com
County calls joint outer belt meeting

Relocating road: Kane officials to confer with Sugar Grove, Aurora, Montgomery

By Steve Lord
STAFF WRITER

GENEVA — Kane County Board officials want to meet with representatives from Aurora, Sugar Grove and Montgomery to discuss a possible eastern location for the outer-belt highway.

The session, officially a joint meeting between the County Board’s transportation and development committees, is set for 9 a.m. Feb. 28 in the basement auditorium in Building A at the Kane County Government Center, 719 S. Batavia Ave., Geneva.

The three municipalities, as well as the Kaneland School Board and Kendall County, will be invited to the meeting.

The meeting was set at the request of County Board members who want to discuss possible alternative routes for a proposed outer-belt highway.

The main corridor for the proposed Prairie Parkway is in far western Kane and Kendall counties, linking Interstate 88 with Interstate 80.

The Kane County Board passed a resolution opposing that corridor, saying it would put a highway in a place the county has planned to keep as rural as possible. Kane officials say it conflicts with the county’s 2020 Land Use plan, which seeks to keep agricultural uses in western Kane County.

This highway not only would divide farms, officials say, but would drive development contrary to the 2020 plan.

There is another 2020 plan, however, — the county’s 2020 Transportation Plan, adopted in 1996 — that will be the focus of the Feb. 28 meeting.

According to that plan, the eastern corridor that meets Route 56 just south of where it intersects with I-88 between Aurora and Sugar Grove and runs almost due south to 1-80 near Minooka, is the preferred route.

There also is an option that runs south between Sugar Grove, Montgomery and Aurora to Route 30, turns west on Route 30 and runs to where it would meet the western corridor in Kendall County.

Another site?

As far as Kane County transportation and planning officials are concerned, the eastern route is the one on Kane County’s planning books.

“That’s the one being referred to as the alternative,” said Phillip Bus, Kane County development director.

As asked if county officials will discuss that alternative with the municipalities at the Feb. 28 meeting, Bus said, “They’ll have knowledge of it.”

The western corridor (actually a middle corridor, because another proposed corridor would run through DeKalb County) was designated the preferred one by officials with the Illinois Department of Transportation’s District 3 office in Ottawa, the agency handling the outer-belt project.

The state now is sorting comments from the public, with the intent of recording a corridor to protect it from development.

During the controversy that swirled throughout Kane and Kendall counties during the comment period, state Transportation Secretary Kirk Brown said he intended to have his department site a corridor but that he did not care where the exact location was.

He gave Kane and Kendall counties the option of picking another site that would be appropriate.

Turn to JOINT, A2
Kendall might eschew firm stand on outer belt

Letter falls flat: County Board chairman wanted IDOT to study eastern alternative for corridor

By John Zaremba

YORKVILLE — The likelihood that the Kendall County Board will take a clear stand on the much-contested Prairie Parkway faded Tuesday, as board members took no action on a letter that asks the Illinois Department of Transportation to consider further an alternative eastern corridor for the highway.

Acting against the wishes of Chairman John Church, R-Oswego, board members declined to endorse Church’s letter, which he said he wrote in hope of a compromise between those who favor the proposed corridor and those who want no freeway at all.

Church said Tuesday night that he plans to withdraw the letter, even though the board did not outwardly reject it.

“Unless something new would develop that we can react to, I don’t see that this board would do anything further,” he said.

By remaining silent, the board misses its opportunity to alter or solidify the highway plans, as IDOT officials have told both the Kane and Kendall county boards that their official positions will be the most influential of all.

IDOT is sifting through more than 500 statements from governments and private citizens and will take them into account in its record of decision, a document that will include a summary of changes made to the corridor and the impacts of those changes.

The letter, written on the board’s behalf, says studying an eastern corridor more thoroughly “allows for an outer belt, as some desire, while still addressing the concerns raised over agricultural protection and premature sprawl.”

One board member said he didn’t necessarily object to the letter’s message, but he did not want to make a hasty decision on it.

“He wanted us to vote on something as complex and controversial as this in 15 minutes,” said board member John Purcell, R-Yorkville, who received the letter just before the board’s meeting Tuesday morning.

Another said that, by advocating an eastern corridor, the board essentially would endorse it.

“I wouldn’t mind talking about it, but not to be sprung on it,” said board member Bill Cote, R-Oswego.

Another board member wanted to a stronger letter that supports particular details rather than broadly asking for another study to determine the best place for the highway’s center line.

“I would like us, as a board, to think of any suggestions . . . rather than asking them to look at something they supposedly did,” said board member Nancy Martin, R-Plano.

Contact John Zaremba at (630) 801-5414 or jzaremba@scn1.com.
Towns added to outer-belt planning

BY DAVID R. KAZAK
Daily Herald Staff Writer

As Kane County leaders seek an easier-to-live-with route for a proposed outer-belt expressway, one county official said Tuesday he wants the towns most affected by the proposal to have input as well.

"We're going to invite towns, including Aurora, Montgomery and Sugar Grove, into the discussions," Kane County Board member William Morse, a Hampshire Republican, said.

Morse leads the board's development committee, which closely works with Kane's municipalities.

To ensure the towns are involved, he wants a joint meeting with the board's transportation committee, which earlier this month began a study of alternative outer-belt expressway corridors.

Plans to build the so-called Prairie Parkway have been a source of controversy since December, when Illinois Department of Transportation officials announced that they wanted to designate a 400-foot-wide, 33-mile long strip of land in Kane and Kendall counties as a corridor for the future expressway.

The expressway, which could be built in about 15 years, would link I-88 west of Route 47 with I-80 near Minooka in Grundy County.

Opponents, including Kane County Board Chairman Mike McCoy, say the state's proposed corridor slices through 9 miles of farmland county leaders and residents believe should be protected from development.

Supporters, including U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert of Yorkville, say development is going to happen anyway, and believe now is the time to protect the corridor.

Kane County's transportation department is studying alternative routes farther east, a placement some say makes more sense. Morse said potentially affected towns should have a say in that study.

"This effort (the joint meeting) will be to get consensus from the municipalities, agreement on a route that would be the least injurious to the county," Morse said.

Business and political leaders in Aurora and Montgomery have expressed favor for the expressway corridor as it stands, while officials and residents of recently incorporated Big Rock, a tiny town of about 600 in southwestern Kane County, have said they're opposed.

Morse said no date for the joint meeting has been set.
**Hastert: Establish beltway centerline**

*Speaker critical of McCoy for opposing highway*

*By MARK FOSTER*
*Kane County Chronicle*

A centerline for the outer beltway must be established now to ensure that the highway will be built, U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert said Monday.

Hastert also criticized Kane County Board Chairman Mike McCoy for his opposition to the beltway during a meeting with the Kane County Chronicle editorial board.

McCoy has cited Kane's 2020 land use plan, which is designed to limit development in the western part of the county, as a reason for his opposition.

Hastert said development is inevitable and that designating a beltway centerline now is necessary to prevent future traffic gridlock.

"To say that just because we have this 2020 plan that growth isn't coming, in my opinion is not realistic," Hastert said. "I think we need to establish a centerline — that's very crucial."

The steady westward march of residential and commercial development has thwarted past attempts to designate a route for a major north-south highway serving the region, Hastert said, including the aborted Fox Valley Freeway that would have run roughly along the Kane-DuPage county line.

"I defy anybody to try to drive from West Chicago to Plainfield, especially at 8 a.m. or at 4 p.m., in less than an hour and a half," Hastert said. "That area is just gridlocked — you can't move north and south.

"What I've tried to do over the years is to say we have to look at the future and we have to plan, and there has to be a centerline," Hastert said.

Once a centerline is designated by the Illinois Department of Transportation, the corridor would be protected by recording it on the land deeds of the properties along the path.

"When I talked about this 12 or 14 years ago, basically I thought there would be a centerline somewhere between Randall Road and Route 47, and that it was feasible," Hastert said. "Today it's not feasible. You can't do it."

Hastert said a centerline study for a beltway in Kane County was performed more than 10 years ago, and expressed frustration that little progress has been made since McCoy became county board chairman.

"I talked to the county board and the chairman before Mr. McCoy was ever chairman, and said we need to move forward on it and we need to plan it and we need to work with the state, and after Mr. McCoy came in, nothing ever got done," Hastert said.

And four years ago I pushed this thing again and didn't get a lot of enthusiasm, and they (county officials) said 'well now we're doing this 2020 plan and we just can't do this,'" Hastert said.

Kane County offices were closed for President's Day Monday, and McCoy could not be reached for comment.

See *BELTWAY*, page 2
Hastert, R-Yorkville, has since 1987 represented a sprawling northern Illinois congressional district, the 14th, which includes all of Kane County.

Hastert clearly is annoyed not only with McCoy, but also with the notion that he would seek political retribution because of McCoy's opposition to the beltway.

"Well first of all, I represent Kane County. Kane County happens to be Mr. McCoy's constituents. They're also my constituents," Hastert said. "And I think I'll stand on my record of taking care of my constituents. I do the best that I can and I have a record of doing it."

The outer beltway would be a 33-mile highway connecting I-88 to I-80.

A northern leg of the beltway, running from I-88 to I-90, is not included in the corridor protection program.

Hastert indicated that he generally supports the corridor selected by IDOT, but believes the agency's engineers need to be more sensitive to property owners when designating the precise route.

"They could follow some of the power easements and interfere with life less than they have," Hastert said, suggesting that the highway be routed along "section lines, instead of down the middle of farm fields."

The state's choice for a corridor meets I-88 just east of Kaneville. It runs south past Big Rock. The corridor travels between Yorkville and Plano in Kendall County, finally meeting up with I-80 near Minooka.

Hastert, noting he has already secured $15 million in federal funds for the beltway, said he expects to deliver more, and does not believe the beltway should be a toll highway.

"I think this should be a local thing for local people to use," Hastert said.
MOT gets 1,000 beltway comments

The Illinois Department of Transportation received about 1,000 comments and questions about the proposed corridor protection plan for the outer beltway. IDOT's Ottawa office will go through the comments and prepare a recommendation for Secretary Kirk Brown, who will release his findings in 45 to 60 days.

More than 1,000 comments were received by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) on their proposed corridor protection plan for the outer beltway. The comments were received by IDOT's Ottawa office and will be reviewed and analyzed before a recommendation is made to Secretary Kirk Brown. The deadline for receiving comments was Feb. 10. The comments will be used to inform the development of the corridor plan, which is expected to be completed by the end of the year.
Eldamain Road study findings weeks away

CATS model: County will get projections for both with and without outer belt

By Mike Norbut - Beacon News

YORKVILLE — Kendall County should know within the next several weeks if extension of Eldamain Road is a project worth pursuing.

The county, which decided last month to study traffic flow at certain intersections along Eldamain Road, has received word that the Chicago Area Transportation Study will create traffic projections for the corridor free, County Engineer Francis Klas said.

The county actually may receive two separate projections, based on the potential existence or non-existence of the proposed outer-belt freeway.

"The current traffic model doesn’t have the Prairie Parkway in it," Klas said. "They’ll be able to model Eldamain in a no-Prairie Parkway scenario, but, when you put it in place, it will be more difficult."

The extension for Eldamain Road, as proposed, would cross the Fox River south of River Road and cut southwest to connect with Highpoint Road where it meets Fox Road. The route would follow Highpoint Road south until it nears Route 71. It then would break away from Highpoint Road, cross Route 71 about 500 feet to the east and eventually join Lisbon Road.

The road has been a source of contention among County Board members and residents in the area for several months. The board has decided to wait until after a study is conducted to set a center line for the road, however.

Board members also discussed the topic of jurisdiction at Wednesday’s Public Works Committee meeting. Right now, the county has no control over the road south of the Fox River, but, if a bridge was built and the extension was completed, the county might want jurisdiction, Klas said.

First, however, board members need to know if a need for the road exists.

"There may not be the numbers to justify it in five or 10 years," Klas said, "but, if the whole idea is, in fact, if it shows the road is needed in 20 years, the time to protect the corridor is now."

Contact Mike Norbut
at (630) 844-5829 or
mnorbut@cnj.com.
2-14-02

Fence Post

Many reasons why pets need to wear rabies tag

Why does my dog need to wear a rabies tag? This is a question many people ask.

There are many good reasons for keeping the rabies tag on your pet. First of all, it is proof that your pet is current on its rabies vaccination. Anyone finding or seeing your pet would be able to immediately see that the pet is current on its vaccinations. If you need proof of vaccinations for some reason, it is right at hand and you don’t have to go digging in a drawer somewhere for the vaccine certificate. The rabies tag alone is proof because the number can be traced by the Animal Control Department.

The most important reason is that it serves as a means of identification. There was a case when a family was traveling in another state and their dog got away from them and they couldn’t find it. Someone happened to find their pet and contacted the Kane County Animal Control office, gave them the rabies tag number and the office was able to track down who owned the dog and where it lived.

Even in your own area, this is important. If your dog was running loose and was picked up by the Animal Control Department without the rabies tag, the officer or shelter would have no way of contacting the owner. After five days, a dog with no identification would be put up for adoption, if an owner could not be located. Then your pet could be adopted by someone else.

There is another important reason to have your dog wear a tag. Even though it is an unhappy thought, if a dog was running loose and was hit by a car and injured or killed, the owners could be contacted. The tag number could even tell you what vet the animal used so the vet could be contacted as well.

We understand many people don’t like to put the rabies tag on their pets for various reasons. The dog chews it off, they fall off the hook or we don’t like hearing the tags jingle. These are all understandable, but they are all easy to fix and still have the tag on.

To keep them from falling off you can use a small key ring. To keep them from jingling you can get plastic see-through covers or attach them to the collar with studs. This also would keep the pet from chewing it off.

Please put the rabies tag on your pets. For their sake!

Philip Zavitz
Warden
Kane County Animal Control

Our letters policy

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Fax letters: (630) 232-4962
E-Mail: editorial@kccchronicle.com

Letters

she was losing her own battle with breast cancer. Despite her
problems, she decided to write us a letter and enclose a check when
she read a Christmas Eve story about our need for funding.
Because she was under 40 when she was diagnosed, she wanted to
make sure we’d have the money to help out someone “who wasn’t
age-appropriate but still needed funding for a potentially life-
saving mammogram.”

Of course, we will honor her request — but that’s not the point.
Rather, the point is we wanted everyone — including the
newspapers and radio stations — who helped us raise almost
$10,000 during the last month.

Kay Catlin
Sharon Lough
St. Charles

Our heartfelt thanks go out to each and every one of you.

Daily Herald
Fox Valley in 60 seconds

2-14-07

Daily Herald

Man killed in trailer park

A 28-year-old man was shot and killed in Aurora Township trailer park Tuesday night. The people inside were shot by a man who entered the trailer. Two of the people in the trailer were injured, but their condition was not released for security reasons.

Transfer station application in:

Waste Management Inc. officials Thursday filed plans to convert the Woodland landfill in South Elgin into a transfer station. The landfill is expected to close by the end of this year. Although the landfill will not be able to accept trash once it is closed, Waste Management Inc. wants to use it as a stopping point to load trash onto larger trucks that would haul the trash to another landfill. County board members must hold a public hearing on the proposal within the next 90 to 120 days. A final decision from the board must be made within the next 180 days. Copies of the application are at the Kane County Clerk's Office, 719 S. Batavia Ave. in Geneva. The application also is available at the St. Charles Public Library, 1 S. Seventh Ave. in St. Charles or at the Gail Borden Library, 200 N. Grove Ave., Elgin.

Sandwich votes support for Prairie Parkway Plan

The Sandwich Village Board voted to support the Prairie Parkway Plan. The board members voted 4-0 to approve the plan, which would extend the Parkway south from the existing route to the border of DuPage County. The plan is expected to cost $93 million and would be funded by a combination of state and federal grants.

Batavia brotherhood banquet:

The Batavia Men's Brotherhood will have its 33rd annual banquet at 6:30 p.m. Feb. 19 at Holy Cross Church, 2300 Main St., Batavia. The Rev. Max Streidel, a Batavia native who now serves as a priest in the Rockford Diocese, will be the featured speaker. Tickets are $10 and are available by calling Batavia churches, Bob Nelson at (630) 879-1387 or Harry Pommier at (630) 406-0109. The Batavia Men's Brotherhood banquet has its roots in the first half of the 20th century. The banquet provides an evening of fellowship and inspiration for Christian men.

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Outer-belt comments stacked up for IDOT

Within a few months: State to release records of hearing, issue decision

By Dave Parro Staff writer 2-12-02

Now comes the daunting task of evaluating the hundreds of letters, petitions and resolutions sent by property owners, nearby residents and politicians.

Illinois Department of Transportation officials started reviewing public input Monday on the Prairie Parkway, a day after the state's 60-day public-comment period ended. With the help of consultants, IDOT staff will look at each comment individually and determine whether the suggestion is feasible.

"We specifically sit down and look at the impacts and benefits of the (suggested) change," said Gregg Mounts, program engineer for IDOT's Ottawa district.

Mounts said there has been no count of comments submitted to IDOT, but it is "over 500."

Within a few months, a decision should be made on the proposed corridor-protection area for the 33-mile highway. IDOT will decide whether to make minor changes to the 400-foot right-of-way strip presented at the Dec. 10 public hearing, move the corridor to another location or drop the highway plans altogether.

After all the comments have been evaluated, IDOT will release a Record of Hearing, which will include copies of all the comments received and a summary of all the comments. The state will also issue a Record of Decision, which will include a summary of changes made to the corridor and a the impacts of those changes.

The two documents are normally released at the same time, Mounts said, but the magnitude of this project and the relatively high number of comments received could cause IDOT to release the Record of Hearing first in this case. No date has been set for any of the records.

A news release will also be issued once a decision is made, Mounts said.

More hearings possible

If IDOT decides to make significant changes to the corridor — such as choosing an eastern alternative — another public hearing and public-comment period will have to be held, Mounts said. Some Kane and Kendall County officials have indicated they will try to come up with an eastern route to present to the state.

Mounts said additional comments will be considered throughout the evaluation process, including those from the county officials or residents, but they will not be included in the official Record of Hearing.

Kane County's transportation and development staffs plan to meet early next month to look at the different corridors and evaluate their effects on the county's long-term plans. County Board Chairman Mike McCloy said the county will continue working toward a consensus solution for the road.

IDOT officials have indicated they will adjust the corridor based on input from the two counties.

Kendall County Board Chairman John Church said the county could take further action at its board meeting Feb. 19, but no decision has been made. Church has been among a small group of officials, environmentalists and engineers who have been looking at the feasibility of an eastern alternative, but any additional recommendations made by that committee would not necessarily be backed by the county, he said.

Mounts said the comments received so far have been both general and very specific, so some are easier to digest than others. The very specific requests could take some time to process, he said.

While similar comments from a higher number of people could be given more weight, Mounts said the process of evaluation isn't an exact science. Because some comments are letters from individuals and others are petitions, for example, it becomes difficult to assign values to the comments.

"It's hard to weigh these one for one," Mounts said. "You have to look at them and get a feel for their concerns.

Contact Dave Parro at (630) 801-5495 or dparro@scn1.com.
Montgomery declares support for Prairie Parkway proposal

By Jim Faber
Staff Writer

MONTGOMERY — It took this village just minutes to put its stamp of approval on the proposed Prairie Parkway.

At a brief Village Board meeting Monday night, the Board voted unanimously to offer Montgomery's support to the siting of a corridor through western Kane and Kendall counties for the possible outerbelt road, which would link Interstates 88 and 80.

In the same resolution the board advocates a full interchange at Route 47 and Interstate 88 and supports having the Prairie Parkway extended north as far as Interstate 90.

"My personal feeling is that the outer belt is a necessity," said Village President Marilyn Michelin. "In 10 or 15 years, we will see how essential this is."

Montgomery is supporting the corridor to the west of Route 47 instead of the eastern corridor because that path would run through Montgomery and would disrupt five subdivisions, said Village Manager Anne Marie Gaura.

Those five subdivisions have a total of 2,487 homes, duplexes and townhomes which would house roughly 6,565 people, Michelin wrote in a letter to the Illinois Department of Transportation.

Trustee Peter Heinz was the only board member to comment on the resolution of support for the proposed Prairie Parkway when he asked where the funds for the project were coming from.

Village staff said expenses for studies related to the road were covered by the federal government.

About $15 million that would cover a Phase I study, which would include environmental, traffic and need assessments, is earmarked by the Federal Highway Administration.

Contact Jim Faber at (630) 844-5889 or faber@cn1.com.
How would you like a highway in your yard?

To our neighbors in Yorkville, Sugar Grove and Aurora Township who support the Prairie Parkway, your towns are committed to development. Your resolutions in support of the outer belt are transparent efforts at sleight of hand. You are saying, "Build it for our benefit, but don't put it in our front yard."

Those of us who live in Kaneville and Big Rock, those of us to whom you would push off all the noise, dirt, congestion and added development of this highway, we say this to you:

We don't want this highway, and we don't need it. You say you do. If you want development in your towns, then you must live in the midst of the highway, and the noise and congestion that will surround this road. If you truly support this road and development, then let it be in the eastern corridor.

If the purpose of the road is to relieve congestion, then build it in the congested areas. Our townships — Kaneville and Big Rock — are not congested, and that is because we are committed to preserving the rural landscape and protecting our farm and prairie resources here at home.

Our land is not vacant. It is in use, feeding a larger population far beyond the Fox Valley. Building this unnecessary road in this path will destroy a non-renewable resource, some of the best farmland in the world. If you support the Prairie Parkway, live with it in your own front yard.

Joann Murdock
Lee Murdock
Kaneville

Stop outer-belt route and save farms, history

As a lifetime resident of Kane and Cook counties, I bitterly oppose and protest the north/south outer-belt expressway.

It would destroy the richest farmland in our country, along with the historical value of Kaneville, which dates from 1836. The outer belt cuts into two roads — our east/west Main Street and our south/east Harter Road — too close to town.

There has to be a better and less costly way by using existing roads that would not destroy as many rich farms and our small town of Kaneville.

The plans need more thought and consideration to save Illinois farms and historical communities so that future generations can enjoy the wealth of our farms and small towns.

Larry Suggett
Kaneville
Court employees approve one-year contract with Kane system

By Steve Lord
STAFF WRITER

GORNNA - About 115 court-services employees here Friday vowed to give the Kane County courts.

The contract between the courts and probation officers, youth-home workers and other assorted court-services employees in Kane, DeKalb and Kendall counties provides for an across-the-board 2 percent increase that could give employees a chance to get another 2 percent increase before the end of the year.

The overall effect will be about a 3.5 percent average wage hike for employees, according to Jim Mueller, court-services director. That number is based on where employees are on the pay scale, he said.

The vote to approve the contract was 47 to 39.

The one-year duration means court-services administrators and the employees, represented by Teamsters Local 330 in Elgin, will be back at the bargaining table soon.

The contract is retroactive to Dec. 1, so both sides already are into the third month of the contract. Which means we'll take a couple of months off before we sit down and start again," Mueller said.

Union members and representatives did not return calls Friday. From the state's attorney's office to court services, county officials and elected officers have said during the last year that salaries have to be upgraded.

Probation officers in the 16th Judicial Circuit, which includes Kane, DeKalb and Kendall counties, have made a similar complaint.

Union members said probation officers are paid in a range between $27,000 and $40,000 a year, but it takes at least 10 years of service for probation officers to get to the $40,000-a-year level.

Most don't last that long. Members said probation officers typically would go from $27,000 a year to about $29,000 a year in five years.

The new contract would raise the starting pay from $27,000 a year to $28,400 a year, Mueller said.

At one point, court-services officials had offered a three-year contract with a 2 percent raise in each of the three years. Employees rejected that offer.

Mueller said it is possible the county will change its financial situation in regard to the courts within the next year.

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The mayor of Plato and the AEDC back Prairie Parkway

The mayor of Plato and the Aurora Economic Development Corpn (AEDC) has joined theumeric to support the proposed Prairie Parkway Corridor.

The mayor of Plato and the AEDC have endorsed the plan, which was designed to improve the economic development of the area.

The mayor of Plato and the AEDC have endorsed the plan, which was designed to improve the economic development of the area.
Outer belt: Slow down, and site it properly

The Issue: A centerline for the proposed outer-belt freeway is about to be set.

We say: Action came too quickly and without proper study or explanation of its purpose. Still, growth is inexcusable, and we support the concept of an outer beltway.

When we consider the future highway needs of Kane and Kendall counties, three statements seem to ring true:

- Growth is inevitable.
- Planning is essential.
- Delay is expensive.

Growth is driven by the demand for housing and jobs. Builders say people have an impossible dream: They want to live five minutes from everywhere and five minutes from nowhere. People who want their homes to be on the last farm will find that they can't move west far enough or fast enough. If projections are accurate—for example, that the population of western Kane County will triple in just two decades—current north-south arteries are clearly inadequate. Interstate 39 is too far west, Route 47 cuts through the heart of Elburn and Yorkville, Randall Road is clogged with traffic.

If we don't plan for highways, we run the risk of having roads that can't do the job. Route 63, for example, is a headache at most times of the day. It would be nice to suggest that people find an alternate north-south route, but there is none. Eola Road is already showing the strain, and proposals for an expressway along the EADE right-of-way have encountered obstacles.

Time is money, especially with highway construction. Costs of labor, fuel, materials and machinery will rise, of course, but the cost of land can really put pressure on the public pocketbook.

King State Parkway, or outer-belt freeway, proposed to run west of Route 47 to link Interstates 80 and 85. Many balked at the construction of Interstate 355, but more seem to see that expressway. Many complain about the congestion on Randall Road, but more seem to want it. If side issues deter us from an honest examination of the need for an outer-belt expressway, the next generation of drivers might wonder why we failed to learn anything from the north-south traffic mess to the east. That would be a hard position to defend.
Farmers fear beltway will split land

Kane County bureau questions whether process will abide by preservation act

By TOM SCHLUETER
Kane County Chronicle

GENEVA — Dave Werdin of Kaneville Township remembers when the Illinois Toll Highway Authority extended I-88 west of Aurora.

Farms got split up and the roads farmers used to get to and from their fields were blocked.

"That's a big disruption in our farm operations," Werdin said.

One farmer had 37 acres split off of his farm that he had to sell. Another 15-acre parcel is still owned by the Tollway, which rents it out.

The splitting of farm land is one reason the 15,000-member Kane County Farm Bureau is opposing the proposed Prairie Parkway. Better known as the outer beltway.

In its statement to the Illinois Department of Transportation, the farm bureau lists several reasons why it opposes the corridor protection process and the specific corridor preferred by the state.

Not only would IDOT's plan place restrictions on property owners' abilities to improve their land, the process would prejudice where the road will go before studies are made.

The farm bureau also questioned whether the process runs contrary to the Illinois Farmland Preservation Act and IDOT's Agricultural Land Preservation Policy.

Commenting on the specific corridor preferred by IDOT, the farm bureau said the state has not provided "a detailed comparison of objective and subjective planning factors considered for each of the three corridors."

"We find that neither our organization, nor the public at large, has been provided with the necessary facts to make that judgment."

The Prairie Parkway if built would consume about 1,300 acres of farm land in the two counties.

The farm bureau is encouraging IDOT to locate the corridor "along existing property, section or township lines to minimize dividing farms and leaving uneconomic remnants."

Without that consideration, Werdin said, farmers would be left with land they can't get to.

"It would wreak havoc," he said.

Werdin wonders why the state doesn't choose less desirable land, such as used gravel pits or existing brownfields closer to the population.

See BELTWAY, page 2
Beltway
Continued from page 1

"The urban area is what's causing the traffic," Werdin said. "But no, prime farmland is what they want."

Another problem of new roadways in agricultural areas is the effect on drainage. Drain tiles cross many fields, and keep water from collecting on the fields.

"The field tiles are so important, and the roads wreck the drainage," he said. "Not everybody wants to sell their farm and make big bucks."

The Kendall County Farm Bureau went on record last month as opposing the beltway.

The public comment period for the beltway ended Sunday. IDOT now will go through the thousands of comments on the corridor and the protection plan, a process expected to take several months.

The 33-mile beltway would run between I-88 and I-80. A northern leg, running from I-88 to I-90, is not included in the corridor protection program.

The IDOT is taking public comment until Feb. 10 on the proposed corridor. The corridor would be protected by recording it on property owner's deeds.

The state's choice for a corridor meets I-88 just east of Kaneville. It runs south past Big Rock. The corridor travels between Yorkville and Plano in Kendall County, finally meeting up with I-80 near Minooka.

Action
Continued from page 1

Bush's State of the Union speech, lumping Iran, Iraq and North Korea together as an axis threatening international security, prompted a familiar response. There are "different gradations" of what the United States should do, the senator said.

"North Korea can be dealt with diplomatically, the Iranians "need us to be very tough" and in Iraq, Saddam is simply a "rogue state," Graham said. "My question is, is this the time to do it? Shouldn't we be focusing on completing the war on terrorism?"

Republican Sen. Chuck Hagel of Nebraska, ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, has been among those who have called for a "managed" withdrawal from Iraq. He urged Bush to develop a "bold plan" for ending the war.

"We need to show the Iraqis we are committed to helping them bring about democracy," Hagel said. "This is a brilliant opportunity, a legacy for American people and a chance for the world to see the power of American ideals."
Farm Bureau opposes outer belt

By Marie-Anne Hogarth
STAFF WRITER

ST. CHARLES — Because the dreams of farmers may be shattered, said Kane County Farm Bureau President Mike Kenyon, the Farm Bureau is not lending its support to the proposed Prairie Parkway, a highway stretching 33 miles through western Kane and Kendall counties to connect Interstates 88 and 80.

Following what Kenyon said was unanimous agreement among Farm Bureau Board members, Kenyon wrote a letter to Illinois Department of Transportation officials Thursday, telling the state that the bureau opposes "corridor protection" in building the road.

- Corridor protection allows the state to designate a corridor before performing detailed studies, some of which could take years. Under the law, once the corridor is recorded, people living along the corridor cannot build without first giving the state option to buy their property.

- "My main concern is that people are treated fairly," Kenyon said. "We will have a study that impacts the environment, but what the heck about the people?"

- Corridor protection would place a burden on 191 Kane and Kendall county property owners along the corridor, Kenyon's letter says, and it would force IDOT into one, predetermined corridor if the road is ever built.

Farm Bureau Manager Steve Arnold said that corridor protection might benefit some land owners. Recording the corridor in the public domain gives land owners the chance to sell their property early, before there is a theoretical cloud on the title, because the whole community knows the land will become a road.

Arnold said, however, that's only a benefit if the road gets built, "and

* Turn to OUTER BELT, A2
that is a huge if."

Kenyon's letter faults IDOT for not providing the Farm Bureau and the public with sufficient information to answer the second question addressed in public hearings: "Is this the proper corridor?"

Farm Bureau officials said they asked IDOT for, but did not receive, detailed comparisons of planning factors in the three corridors - the one through western Kane County and alternative corridors to the east and west.

While other officials did receive some information from IDOT, Arnold said the Farm Bureau never got it, and IDOT did not make a good-faith effort to provide the public the facts.

"You become suspicious of a state organization that doesn't give you all the information, which you paid for," Kenyon said. "They are nice guys. They come to the meetings and answer the questions, but they don't give you details.

IDOT Program Development Engineer Greg Mounts said his office has been working to send the information to as many people as possible, but some people still say IDOT doesn't have sufficient details.

"The information that we have provided is what we have at corridor protection," Mounts said. "If they feel that information is lacking, then they don't feel that corridor protection is the correct process."

The Farm Bureau also made recommendations in case the state proceeds with studies for a future north-south transportation link.

Among these, the Farm Bureau recommends:

- The planning process should account for the reality that transportation corridors often determine growth areas, and public funds will be expended by local government to extend infrastructure...

- The Farm Bureau also advised IDOT that planning be done in cooperation with local governments, corridors should minimize impact to farmland, and corridor protection should be used sparingly to preserve potential river and highway crossings in areas of rapid development.

Sunday deadline for outer-belt comments

The public-comment period on the Prairie Parkway ends Sunday, marking the start of the state's evaluation of the proposed highway corridor.

Illinois Department of Transportation officials will review all the comments submitted and make any necessary changes to the alignment before recording a legal centerline.

IDOT officials have said a summary report of comments will be issued within a couple of weeks after the deadline, but no date has been set for a decision on the alignment.

Last-minute comments may be sent to James Jareb, district engineer, IDOT District 3, 700 E. Norris Drive, Ottawa, IL 61350.

operations, Jackson said.

"The only way we find out is, unfortunately, when something like this happens," Jackson said.
Republican Party chairman race heats up

Officials will meet April 1 for caucus vote for the party's leadership

**Chronicle**

By JOE BIESK
Shaw News Service

GENEVA - While local politicians prepare for March's primary election, a behind-the-scenes battle for the Kane County's Republican Party's top slot is brewing.

Kane County Auditor Bill Keck, the current county Republican Party chairman, will square off against former Campton Township Supervisor Ed Malek for the post in early April.

Meanwhile, Kane County Sheriff Kenneth Ramsey said Thursday he is not an active candidate for the post.

"I have had some people ask me to consider that and I've told them that I'm not interested in this. And my intention is to support Bill Keck for his re-election to that post," Ramsey said.

"But I want to listen to everybody that's running, or going to run for it, or that's interested in it, and see what everybody says."

Republican officials will meet April 1 to hold a caucus vote for the party's leadership. Precinct committeemen have the final say as to who the county's party leaders will be for the next two years.

The main responsibility of the county Republican chairman is to lead other party politicians and organize the party's efforts. Keck, who is in his first stint as party chairman, said he plans to defend his seat, regardless of who opposes him.

"Any opposition I will have will be from some factions who probably feel that their interests are not served or they did not have people presenting them to the central committee," Keck said.

"Some factions might feel their interests are not served. But you can't please everybody, which I've found out."

Malek, a Chicago insurance defense lawyer, said he made his final decision on Jan. 15, when family matters had prevented him from advertising his planned move.

Although Malek said he respects Keck, he feels he would help energize Kane's Republican Party.

"Bill Keck is a gentleman. I think he's a very nice man," Malek said.

"I think that I, as a person who has been involved in politics out here in Kane County for over 15 years, have something that I bring to the table that I've been told would be a breath of fresh air." Ramsey said he talked to the auditor Thursday morning by phone to inform him he was not seeking to unseat Keck as the current chairman.

Ramsey acknowledged his supporters have approached him and encouraged him to seek the bid. However, Ramsey said his duties as sheriff and an upcoming term as president of the FBI National Academy Associates would preclude him from adequately performing all three duties.

Kane Farm Bureau attacks outer-belt plan

Official says IDOT not providing facts

By William Presecky
Tribune staff reporter

Calling for a needs assessment and complaining about limited information from the state, the Kane County Farm Bureau Thursday criticized a plan to protect a possible outer-belt expressway corridor through the western portion of the county.

In a statement to the Illinois Department of Transportation, the organization claims the project would place a burden on 1,000 property owners in Kane and Kendall Counties and force IDOT into only one predetermined corridor if the transportation link is eventually built.

The state set a Sunday deadline for public comment on IDOT's proposal to safeguard a 400-foot-wide corridor running 33 miles between Interstate Highways 55 and 88.

In the statement, bureau president Mike Kenyon of South Elgin said the state's plan is not consistent with the purposes and intent of the Illinois Farmland Preservation Act and with IDOT's own Agricultural Land Preservation Policy.

"Corridor protection, if used at all as a planning tool, should be used sparingly to preserve potential river and highway crossings in areas of rapid development," the farm bureau said.

The bureau represents nearly 10,000 families in the Fox River Valley, including nearly 1,000 farm operators and farmland owners.

"The Kendall County Farm Bureau voted last month to oppose the corridor protection plan largely on grounds that it was advanced by IDOT without local advice," Kenyon said.

Support for the plan has come from the larger municipalities affected by the proposal as well as from various economic development interests in those areas.

"Both the Kane and Kendall bureaus informed IDOT of their continued support for other transportation improvements," Kenyon said.

We support the maintenance of infrastructure and its improvements when the need has been justified and when affected parties are fairly compensated for their contribution to the common good," wrote Kenyon.

Support for the state's preferred expressway corridor is not possible under the circumstances, however, he said.

"Neither our organization, nor the public at large, has been provided with the necessary facts to make that judgment," he said.

Since unveiling its corridor plan in December, numerous public meetings and hearings have been held. And hundreds have asked questions and made comments, most of which have been forwarded to IDOT.

So intense has been the response that an IDOT planner said recently it could take two months to review the comments. There has been no formal projection by IDOT as to when it might record a corridor.
Farmers say no to expressway corridor

By David R. Kazak
Daily Herald Staff Writer

An organization of Kane County farmers said Thursday it opposes the creation of an outer-belt expressway corridor in the county's western rural areas because the corridor would be a burden to landowners in its path.

The Kane County Farm Bureau, which represents some 1,300 farmers, is the latest group to voice concern over the corridor protection plan. Kane County Board Chairman Mike McCoy also opposes the plan and has said he's researching whether he can stop it with a lawsuit.

At issue is an Illinois Department of Transportation proposal to designate a 400-foot-wide, 33-mile-long strip of land from I-80 to I-88 as a corridor in which an expressway could be built sometime in the next 15 to 20 years. Nine miles of the proposed corridor goes through Kane County, in rural Big Rock and Kaneland townships a few miles west of Route 47.

Among other things, corridor designation would restrict affected landowners from making any improvements inside the corridor's boundaries unless IDOT is first given a chance to buy the land.

Farm bureau spokesman Steve Arnold said Thursday the majority of farmers in his organization don't buy the IDOT claim that corridor protection would keep the strip of land clear from suburban development encroaching from the east.

That, Arnold said, is because contrary to IDOT's assumptions, western Kane County will face little, if any, development in the next 10 years.

"So to us, it's only logical that corridor protection doesn't accomplish much, while at the same time it puts a cloud over the people who own the property," Arnold said.

State officials should hold off on corridor designation until they determine not only the purpose of an expressway but whether it is needed.

See CORRIDOR on PAGE 12

Corridor: Area chambers support plan

Continued from Page 1

he said.

James Jereb, the IDOT engineer responsible for the proposal, said Thursday that a Kane County Farm Bureau letter informing him of the organization's opposition to corridor protection is one of many comments he's received.

"We've gotten a number of negative comments, but we've also had some comments in support of the concept," he said. "We're looking at all of the comments and giving them fair consideration."

Some groups, including the chambers of commerce in Aurora and Elgin, support IDOT's plan.

"But for now, it's really hard to say where we're going on this," Jereb said.
Thanks, Sen. Lauzen, for outer-belt stance

My wife and I recently sent letters to 25 federal, state, and local representatives voicing our opposition to the Prairie Parkway highway project. I am sure that we were not alone in that effort. We would like to express our gratitude to state Sen. Chris Lauzen for not only reading our letter but responding to it. Mr. Lauzen took the time to call us personally to say that he was releasing a position paper in opposition of this road in its current proposed location. He said that he would send us a copy of that release, which we have since received.

Sen. Lauzen is the only representative we have heard from to date, and, while we thank him for that, what's more important is that his opposition to this project in its current configuration is clear and unequivocal. In a political environment that too often lends itself to fence riding, we feel that the senator clearly stated his position and hope that he will prove to be a valuable ally in the fight to convince proponents of this project to consider other options. He also stated that he is opposed to creating other corridors similar to Orchard Road and Randall Road. While we did not get specifics, we assume, and hope, that he is referring to the Beldamin corridor project, which the Kendall County Board and Yorkville Mayor Art Prochaska seem so desperately to want.

Thank you, Sen. Lauzen, for not only taking the time to make that phone call but for “hearing” what the people you represent are saying.

Bill and Carol Uliff
Yorkville

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CASA Kane County receives IBF grant

The Illinois Bar Foundation, the charitable and educational arm of the Illinois State Bar Association, has announced that Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Kane County, located in Geneva, will receive a $3,000 grant. CASA Kane County is among 22 legal-related, nonprofit organizations statewide that were selected by the IBF board of directors to receive $118,250 in grants. Kane County CASA works in the court system using trained volunteers to serve as children’s advocates and represent them in juvenile court. During 2000, 489 children under age 18 were served by the agency.
Beltway plan can benefit affected

**Road warriors:**
Farm Bureau attorney says landowners could force quicker action

By Marie-Anne Hogarth
STAFF WRITER

BIG ROCK TOWNSHIP — There is no question how Marty Hunt feels about a road running right across the street from her horse farm off Dauberman Road.

She wears her feelings on a button on her coat collar — "sprawl way" with a bar through it.

Marty and her husband, Terry, owners of the second-largest, harness-racing, horse-breeding operation in the state, attended a recent meeting at the Kane County Farm Bureau not to protest the planned Prairie Parkway, but to learn more about a law that might impact them soon.

Illinois Farm Bureau attorney Danny Leifel told the Martins, and other landowners along the proposed outer belt corridor, that they actually could benefit if the road gets sited under the Corridor Protection Act.

The state's preferred route for the Prairie Parkway is in western Kane and Kendall counties, running 33 miles from Interstate 88 south to Interstate 80.

Under the Corridor Protection Act, the centerline for the highway, which would be just 40 feet from the Hunts' Cottonwood Farm, could be recorded later this year.

If that happens, then the Hunts and other impacted landowners would need to notify the state before making any improvements to their land. At that point, the state would have 45 days to notify owners of intention to

**INSIDE:**
Two candidates in new House, Senate districts voice support for outer belt. *A7*

buy their land and 120 days to purchase the land or initiate action to acquire it by power of eminent domain, Leifel said.

While many road opponents object to impacting people's property rights before conducting detailed studies, Leifel said the Corridor Protection Act can be good for landowners — as long as the road eventually gets built.

Some road opponents, like Kane County Board Chairman Mike McCoy, disagree. McCoy said the state itself admits to protecting the corridor before undertaking detailed studies, because it is cheaper to buy land before development raises land values.

Clearly, that can't be of benefit to the landowners, McCoy said.

* Turn to *BELT, A2
May speed up decisions

Leifel, however, said that, with corridor protection, landowners can have the upper hand if they file early their intention to develop.

If the state is convinced of those plans, Leifel said, then it may prefer to buy the property now — rather than wait three, four, even 10 years.

The landowner doesn't get stuck with land no one wants to buy because it may be seized by the government some day in the future, Leifel said. Also, the farmer is spared the agony of deciding if the land is worth developing.

Leifel said he isn't giving legal advice, only recommending that people with potentially developable land get an attorney — now.

"You are not dealing with $10,000-an-acre land," Leifel said. "You are talking about a very valuable commodity in this county."

Dick Adorjan, spokesman for the Illinois Department of Transportation, warned that the state doesn't have to buy a farmer's land. IDOT would need to see plans of a person's intention to develop, he said, and the state bases its price on sales of surrounding land, not what a farmer thinks it may be worth one day, Adorjan said.

Breaking up property

Proving that the taking of a portion of a piece of land impacts the whole can be tough in court, however, Leifel said, although he added that the Hunts may have a case.

"If it is just, 'Gee whiz, I'd like to farm the way I always have,'" Leifel said, "you would be hard-pressed to get a judge to agree with you."

Another farmer at the meeting, Bill Dunteman, said the proposed road could impact more than his family's 200 acres that are currently in the proposed corridor. His sod farm near Main Street in Kaneville is over 600 acres.

Dunteman said the road would split the fields into pieces so small that their value would be diminished. Also, the road runs through the farm's irrigation system, which impacts the entire property.

Again, Leifel said a judge would have to decide.

In the end, he said, the land price is based on the land's best and highest use. He warned not to confuse that with sentimental value.

Horse farm operation

"It's depressing," said Marty Hunt.

While some farmers may be thinking about building a house, a hotel or even a golf course to obtain a higher price for their land, the Hunts say their situation is different.

Every inch of their three pieces of land are covered with barns, paddocks or other structures. In the winter months, up to 175 horses stay at the farm, Terry Hunt said. In the summer, there are between 200 and 350 horses.

Unlike the farmer who can opt out of farming several acres of soybeans, the Hunts said they can't easily pick their farm up and slide it west a couple hundred feet.

The Hunts say they built up a business here and a reputation. People come from different states to buy these horses, and, in 15 years, Terry Hunt said he hasn't lost even three customers. Among their successes, the Hunts said they bred Big Tom, the "richest, fastest" horse in Illinois harness racing.

So although the state is only talking about a 250-foot strip of their 80-acre property near Dauberman Road and Route 30, the impact potentially could put them out of business. That strip of land contains a horse paddock and the farm manager's house.
Rt. 53 might be the odd project out

With transportation cuts looming, extension might fall from list of priorities

BY ROBERT MCCOPPIN
Daily Herald Staff Writer

Proposed highway projects in Chicago's suburbs likely will be competing for a smaller share of federal dollars, which planners warn might continue to delay construction, leaving drivers on clogged roads.

President Bush's proposed budget would cut $236 million from Illinois' share of federal highway funding, which is about 10 percent of the state's transportation spending.

Though planners say it's too early to tell which projects might be affected, the proposed reduction is more bad news for an expressway system that is deteriorating and is often clogged with traffic.

In particular, four major highway proposals remain without funds for construction:
- The Route 53 extension through Lake County.
- Extension of the North-South Tollway through Will County.
- A western entrance and bypass for O'Hare International Airport.
- An outerbelt highway through Kane County.

With congressional hearings set to start today on the next six-year authorization of federal transportation funding, which is due to be passed next year, planners say the clock is ticking.

Comparing the projects, Route 53 lacks the high-powered political backing the other projects appear to have.

Last year, Gov. George Ryan proposed extending the North-South Tollway south from I-55 in Bolingbrook south to I-80. Ryan and Daley both support western access into O'Hare. And U.S. Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert supports studying an outerbelt highway through western Kane County.

Now, with funding dwindling, critics say it's time to drop the Route 53 proposal because it's at the end of a long line of unfunded projects.

"Nobody's made the argument that 53 would be the one to build, and you wouldn't pick the one with the most opposition," said Mike Truppa, a consultant for the Lake County Conservation Foundation.

That opposition has been one of the reasons Route 53 has languished for a decade, and why lawmakers are reluctant to get behind it.

The proposed Route 53 extension from Lake-Cook Road to Route 120 and to the I-355 Tollway was one of several extensions proposed by the Illinois General Assembly as far back as 1993, along with the southern extension of I-355.

But planning for the southern extension got much further, in part because it has had broader support among residents and elected officials, according to Dick Adorjan, spokesman for the Illinois Department of Transportation.

Now, with funding dwindling, critics say it's time to drop the Route 53 proposal because it's at the end of a long line of unfunded projects.

The Illinois Department of Transportation got much further, in part because it has had broader support among residents and elected officials, according to Dick Adorjan, spokesman for the Illinois Department of Transportation.

The state bought most of the land for both the southern extension of I-355 and the north end of Route 53.

Most of the utilities were moved out of the way for the I-355 plan, and that project was ready to be built as a tollway until a court order was issued for further environmental study in 1997. That delayed the $700 million project, but after further study, the project awaits a federal decision on whether it can go ahead.

Without a toll increase, the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority soon

See RT. 53 on PAGE 10
Rt. 53: Not everyone thinks plan is dead

Continued from Page 1

will have no money to reconstruct existing roads, let alone extend I-355. However, it is ready to do so if it gets the federal money, officials say.

As I-355 was slowly making progress, the Route 53 project slowed to a snail's pace as the state and the tollway agency made an unprecedented decision to form an organization to study the project. After four years of study, a report by the Lake County Transportation Improvement Project concluded extending Route 53 was better than widening local roads.

Now the project awaits a decision by the governor, who has not disclosed what he will do.

Meanwhile, other projects have received recent pushes.

An agreement last year between the governor and Chicago Mayor Richard Daley to expand O'Hare calls for extending the Elgin-O'Hare Expressway and creating a western airport entrance, and building a road ring O'Hare from the Tri-State Tollway to the Northwest Tollway.

Some parts of those road proposals might be negotiated when federal lawmakers consider a bill to seal the O'Hare deal this spring.

Likewise, the proposal for the Prairie Parkway, a new highway that would run from I-80 to I-88 through Kane, Kendall and Grundy counties, got a boost in the form of $15 million for initial study in federal funds authorized in December.

Yet the so-called outerbelt proposal is so preliminary, and would take 10 to 13 years to build, that analysts say it's not comparable to Route 53.

Whereas land has been purchased for the Route 53 project, outerbelt supporters merely want to establish a potential route.

Not everyone thinks the Route 53 plan is dead.

It has been building momentum in the past year or two, according to Dave Schulz of Northwestern University's Infrastructure Technology Institute, who two years ago thought the Route 53 idea was dead.

Many towns and agencies throughout Lake and northwest Cook counties have passed resolutions in favor of the extension, while opposition primarily comes from three municipalities, some members of the Lake County Board, and anti-sprawl groups.

Traffic congestion in the area has become worse, and studies have concluded that extending Route 53 would reduce travel times as much as local road improvements with less impact on homes and the environment.

But the Route 53 extension still needs an estimated $800 million in state and federal funding.

"Advocates need to take it to the next level for a financing to get this road built," Schulz said. "They probably need to find a champion in the congressional delegation and the state legislature. Until that happens, I'm not sure it will go anywhere."

To get built in a reasonable time, Schulz said, the Route 53 extension probably needs Congress to include special funding in the next six-year transportation bill.

Federal lawmakers from Illinois have not requested funding for Route 53, saying the request must first come from state and local leaders.

Republican Reps. Phil Crane of Wauconda and Mark Kirk of Wilmette, whose constituents would use a Route 53 extension, both said local consensus is necessary.

The Illinois Department of Transportation does submit prioritized lists of projects for federal funding, but the governor negotiates with lawmakers over what gets into the budget.

"We can recommend," Adorjan said. "If the General Assembly has projects that get a higher priority, they tell us. Many of these roads are such a close call, it's a policy decision."

Ultimately, Adorjan said: "The General Assembly and future governors will have to make those choices."
Fence Post

McCoy should keep asking road questions

The Sun-Telegram headline "Will McCoy's opposition hurt county?" was noteworthy for a few reasons. The story had very little to do with the merits of the beltway proposal, and instead focused on the musings of various politicians. The angle of the story was about the politics of transportation. If the county doesn't go along with the speculation about development, and thus the need for the beltway, current, real transportation needs may not be funded due to the influence of House Speaker Dennis Hastert and the discretion of IDOT.

At the same time, the article notes that the speaker has been an advocate of the beltway since 1987 or 15 years. The rationale supplied by IDOT and the speaker remains that the proposed corridor is necessary for future development.

In the past 15 years, that has not happened in the Kane County portion, nor is it projected to occur in the proposed corridor. When Chairman Mike McCoy has asked some logical questions, the speaker and IDOT seem offended.

But once the corridor is defined and recorded, property owners cannot remove, improve or otherwise develop their real estate without the permission of IDOT. Moreover, once a property owner within the corridor notifies IDOT of any proposed change, IDOT has the ability to purchase that property using eminent domain. Notwithstanding the legality of this law, once the corridor is recorded, a substantial number of Kane County residents will have their fundamental property rights trampled. All this power is proposed to be held by IDOT and land that has been held for generations is subject to state purchase for a road that may or may not be necessary.

Most disconcerting, however, is that local politicians are tentative to question the merits of the beltway proposal for fear of losing future transportation funds. The idea behind this remains that if Kane County does not step in line with the vision of Speaker Hastert, then it will be punished. Ironically, we have a situation in which our local politicians are being coerced into accepting a huge road that may be unneeded to obtain funds for roads that are necessary.

In the context of this debate, IDOT and the speaker do not like the fact that McCoy is unwilling to blindly follow a plan without adequate justification.

Apparently, the powerful are not accustomed to providing a rationale for their huge pork projects. In fact, some have questioned whether McCoy should be an advocate and take a position. I am glad McCoy has the backbone to ignore the pressure and insist on answers to legitimate public policy concerns.

The conventional wisdom remains that the proposed beltway is only the first phase, and IDOT's plan is to eventually go north through the county to I-90. This may be a good idea, but as citizens, we are entitled to full disclosure of the plan. There is also the issue of funding, and IDOT and the speaker appear, at best, to be withholding information.

The easiest route McCoy could take right now would be to go along with the wishes of the speaker. This is especially true now that the stakes have increased and funding for Kane County transportation needs has been threatened. It takes a good deal of political courage to ignore these pressures and insist on a rational basis for the beltway proposal. Regardless of where we stand on the merits of the beltway project, we should recognize and be thankful that the current Kane County chairman has the integrity and the fortitude to insist on accountability for the public good instead of succumbing to the political extortion exercised by the speaker.

Timothy P. Dwyer
St. Charles
Candidates Toftoy, Sleezer offer support for outer-belt plan

Citing a "congestion problem," in the Fox Valley, state Senate candidate Ken Toftoy announced his support for the outer-belt freeway Wednesday.

However, Toftoy, who currently serves as Kendall County coroner, supported the road with the caveat that it needed to be realigned in some places to avoid cutting up farms. If the road could be built more along property lines, it would be a good idea, he said.

"I know there's a congestion problem, I see trucks going bumper-to-bumper on Route 47," said Toftoy, who is running in the March 19 Republican primary in the 25th Senate District against incumbent state Sen. Chris Lauzen, R-Aurora, and Geneva resident Scott Sutterlin. "I think we need the freeway.

Another Kendall County resident running for office, Ed Sleezer, also has taken a firm stance in favor of the proposed Prairie Parkway. Sleezer, who is running in the 50th House District against incumbent Rep. Patricia Reid Linder, R-Sugar Grove, and Plain resident Wade Joyce, called the development of new roads in the area "critical" because of the incoming growth.

"Anyone who drives our existing roads knows that the daily increase in traffic is a threat to public safety, the environment and our quality of life," said Sleezer, who currently serves as a Kendall County Board member. "I applaud (House Speaker Dennis) Hastert for his vision in getting the ball rolling on this issue."

The 25th Senate and 50th House districts cover western Kane and Kendall counties, where the Prairie Parkway is proposed for construction. The road would link Interstates 88 and 80.

The two candidates' positions put them on islands in their respective races. In the state Senate race, Sutterlin and Lauzen have both opposed construction of the highway. Meanwhile, in the state representative race, Joyce has opposed the road unequivocally, while Sleezer said he was against it because of its current alignment.

Toftoy cited a poll commissioned by the Aurora organization "Citizens for Common Sense Transportation Planning," which found 78 percent of Kane County residents and 73 percent of Kendall County residents favored establishing a corridor for study as the site of the proposed Prairie Parkway.

"I think the people against it are speaking louder than the people for it," Toftoy said.

Toftoy thinks they'll be speaking about it for a long time, too. Based on debates about completed highways, including the North-South Tollway, Toftoy predicted the freeway wouldn't be built for 20 years.

"I'll be retired by the time it's built," he said. "They were talking about (the North-South Tollway) back in the 90s."
2 towns support outer-belt highway

Sugar Grove and Yorkville set stage

By Hal Dardick
Special to the Tribune

Officials from Sugar Grove and Yorkville on Tuesday passed resolutions backing the proposed outer-belt highway.

In Sugar Grove, trustees voted unanimously to support the Prairie Parkway, which would run north and south through Kane, Kendall and Grundy Counties to link Interstate Highways 88 and 80.

Trustees indicated they prefer the path, about 1.5 miles west of the village, that is being considered by the Illinois Department of Transportation to a more eastern route near Illinois Highway 56 that would limit the village's western development.

Trustees also encouraged IDOT to "record" the western route, then conduct a feasibility study to justify that path and consider extending the highway north to Interstate 90 in McHenry County. And trustees urged IDOT to widen Illinois Highway 47 north of Waubonsie Drive and build a full interchange at Illinois 47 and I-88.

Village President P. Sean Michels said he is sensitive to concerns about the outer-belt running through farmland but also said the highway will be necessary to accommodate the expected growth to the west.

"We understand the concerns, and it was a tough decision for us to make, but we feel we need to look 10 to 15 years into the future," he said. "It's going to be needed. We hear what people are saying, but we are trying to look out for Sugar Grove and the interests of the people who live in the village."

In Yorkville, aldermen voted 5-2 to support a limited-access outer belt west of the city. Alds. Rose Ann Spears and Richard Sticka voted against it.

"There's a lot in that resolution I agree with, but I lived in Lombard, and the house I lived in is immediately adjacent to Interstate 355," Sticka said. "It really came down to a personal thing."

Mayor Art Prochaska long ago voiced his support for the outer belt, saying it was needed to relieve traffic on Illinois Highways 34 and 47, which intersect at the heart of the city.

The Yorkville resolution also called for continued efforts to improve Illinois 34 and 47, collaboration with landowners in the outer belt's proposed path, and efforts to preserve the rural and agricultural character along the path while minimizing the environmental impact.

County gets grant to buy biological, chemical suits

By TOM SCHLUETER
Kane County Chronicle

GENEVA — Kane County will get a federal grant to pay for protective garb that emergency personnel would wear in the event of a biological or chemical attack.

"We're better prepared than any county around," Grevikse said.

The suits would be used in case police have to enter someplace contaminated with a biological or chemical agent where the bad guys are," Bryant said.

Kane, as are all counties throughout the United States, is eligible for more homeland security grants. Another $30,000 grant will be available later this year, while a third grant will come next year, Bryant said.

"It's all for first-response preparedness," Bryant said.

The suits would be used for personal protection equipment, such as the suits, Bryant said.

"The next grants could be for more liberal spending," Bryant said, meaning there will be less restrictions.

He said the county could buy communications equipment with the next grant.
Panel: Beltway will cause sprawl

By TOM SCHLUETER
Kane County Chronicle

SUGAR GROVE — DuPage County-type development could occur in Kane and Kendall counties if the proposed Prairie Parkway is built.

That was the conclusion of transportation planners who spoke at a Conservation Foundation-sponsored seminar Tuesday night at Waubonsie Community College.

Growth occurs around transportation corridors for a simple reason: It’s easy, said Todd Fagan of Land Strategies.

If the highway were to be built, it would attract residents and businesses from the east who are looking for a way out of the congested counties to the east.

“It’s really going to be a shift of population from Naperville and Wheaton,” Fagan said.

The title of seminar was “How Will the Proposed Prairie Parkway Affect Land Use, Sprawl and Development?”

Barbara Berlin of the Environmental Law and Policy Center and Karyn Romano, director of transportation for the Metropolitan Planning Council also were speakers.

A national study showed that the greatest cause of sprawl can be attributed to longer automobile trips, meaning people live farther from their schools and places of employment.

Of the increases in the amount of driving time, only 13 percent can be attributed to population growth, while 35 percent is caused by longer trip lengths, Berlin said.

Defining sprawl and giving development alternatives, Barbara Berlin, Smart Growth Planner with the Environmental Law & Policy Center, speaks at a Conservation Foundation forum at Waubonsie Community College.

“Sprawl follows highways,” Berlin said.

Romano said estimates have ranged from $500 million to $2.1 billion to build the 33-mile beltway, that would run between I-88 and I-80.

The Illinois Department of Transportation is taking comment until Feb. 10 on the corridor. IDOT plans to protect a corridor by recording it on property owner’s deeds.

The state’s choice for a corridor meets I-88 just east of Kaneville. It runs south past Big Rock. The corridor travels between Yorkville and Plano in Kendall County, finally meeting up with I-80 near Minooka.

“If more roads and wider roads were the answer, then Los Angeles would be the best place to live,” Romano said.

Brook McDonald, the Conservation Foundation’s executive director, said IDOT is accepting comments on the corridor protection process, not on the road itself.

“It is my opinion they will record a center line before the end of the year,” McDonald said. “We think they should do a little more research.”

Send written comments to the Illinois Department of Transportation by Feb. 10, 2002, Mr. James J. Jereb, District Engineer, Illinois Department of Transportation, District 3, 700 East North Drive, Ottawa Ill., 61350.
Sugar Grove, Yorkville both favor outer belt

By Marie-Anne Hogarth and Dave Paroo
STAFF WRITERS

As the state’s deadline approaches for public comments about a proposed outer-belt highway through western Kane and Kendall counties, two more communities have weighed in with support for the road.

The village of Sugar Grove in Kane County and the city of Yorkville in Kendall County both passed resolutions Tuesday night supporting the highway, which would link Interstates 88 and 80.

Both did so after holding meetings seeking their residents’ input.

In the case of Sugar Grove, residents filled out cards at a previous meeting indicating which route they would favor for the highway — the road through western Kane County, an eastern alternative, or no preference of the route. Residents weren’t asked if they wanted no outer belt at all, but there was a space on the card for their comments.

In some cases, residents like Georgina Klemm, of the 800 block of Wild Ginger Road in Sugar Grove, wrote, “We prefer that there isn’t a beltway,” although those same residents checked the western alternative as the lesser of two evils.

Overwhelmingly, Sugar Grove and township residents preferred the western to the eastern path, even when they weren’t thrilled about the concept of an outer belt.

Sugar Grove trustees said they presented only a choice of routes because they do not think there will be a choice of whether or not to build a road at all.

“The state is backing this beltway,” said Trustee Perry Clark. “Now is the time for us to tell them where we want it.”

Village has suggestions

Sugar Grove’s resolution, however, went beyond stating the village favors a western roadway — which would pass 1.5 miles outside Sugar Grove’s planning area — to the eastern alternative — which trustees said would limit the village’s eastern expansion.

Sugar Grove’s resolution encourages the Illinois Department of Transportation to record the road’s centerline corridor before conducting feasibility studies.

Scott Buening, the village’s community development director, said he was involved with early planning of the road in his old job as planning, building and zoning director in Kendall County. He explained to trustees that recording the corridor was a starting point, enabling a study to go ahead. Adjustments to the road’s exact path could be made later, he said, depending on the outcome of those studies.

Sugar Grove’s resolution also recommends that Route 47 be widened north of Waubonsee Drive and that there be a full interchange at Interstate 88.

Village President Sean Michels emphasized that Sugar Grove’s recommendation was that the state also continue the beltway north of Interstate 88 to Interstate 50.

Yorkville dissenters

The Yorkville City Council passed its resolution of support despite the first public dissent on the part of some aldermen. The resolution was approved 5-2, with Rich Sticka and Rose Spears voting against. Alderman Marty Munns was absent during the vote.

“It's very difficult to disagree with the things you say here,” Sticka said, “but, at the same time, I realize a lot of people have to give up a lot for this.

“I just can’t bring myself to vote ‘yes’ for this because the county and the people outside this town are being asked to give a lot.”

While Sticka said he agrees with much of what the resolution calls for — cooperation with land owners, securing of open space and a concurrent state study of the expansion of Routes 34 and 47 through the city — he said his experience while living near where Interstate 355 was constructed leaves him sympathetic to landowners in the west.

Spears said she supports a north-south highway, but she voted against the resolution because she is not convinced the proposed route is the right path because there have been no studies conducted. The city’s resolution of support calls for a highway corridor west of the city, but it does not specify a preferred corridor.

The rest of the City Council members were sympathetic to farm and home owners as well, but they said a limited-access highway is necessary to help control the inevitable growth heading west.
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Chamber supports proposed highway

BY KARA SPAR
Daily Herald Staff Writer

A north-south highway running through Kane County recently received the support of the Elgin Area Chamber of Commerce. The city of Elgin may follow suit with its own recommendation for the project.

With the state's public comment deadline of Feb. 10 looming, the Elgin Area Chamber of Commerce voted to support the controversial highway, which would link Interstate 88 to Interstate 80 on a 440-foot wide strip of road rambling through 33 miles of Kendall and Kane county farmland. Eventually, the north-south limited access highway could stretch to Interstate 90.

The chamber is asking the Illinois Department of Transportation to move the proposed beltway closer, if not on, Route 47, said Leo Nelson, president of the Elgin chamber. The proposed beltway runs west of Route 47.

"Route 47 fits into our growth plans," Nelson said. "There may be more development out of this depending on how they zone the land."

Leo Nelson, president of the Elgin chamber

"Route 47 fits into our growth plans. There may be more development out of this depending on how they zone the land."

Elgin residents were included in a recent survey by the Greater Aurora Chamber of Commerce regarding the outerbeltway proposal. Despite increasingly loud protests against the proposal, including strong statements by Kane County Board Chairman Mike McCoy, the survey claims the majority of Kane and Kendall county residents support the proposal.

Fifty-seven percent of the 400 surveyed said they "strongly favor" or "somewhat favor" a highway, though 16 percent "strongly opposed" the proposition and another 16 percent said they did not know if they supported or opposed the route.

"It seemed the only people we were hearing from were the opponents to the highway," said Steve Hatcher, president of the Aurora area chamber. "So we commissioned the poll and guess what, the majority has been really silent."

For those on either side of the issue that are looking to voice their comments on the proposed outerbelt, the Conservation Foundation is hosting a meeting at Waubonsee Community College tonight at 7 p.m.
Valley industry group supports outer belt

Major reservation: Association supports concept, but not necessarily the location

By Steve Lord
STAFF WRITER

GENEVA — The Valley Industrial Association has joined the list of business-related organizations supporting the outer-belt highway.

But in supporting the project, the VIA Board of Directors made it clear it supports the concept of the outer belt, without supporting a specific place for it.

“Our emphasis is it has to happen, so let’s plan for it,” said Colleen Ruddy, association president. “It isn’t our position to say where it has to be.”

The board said it supports the outer belt as consistent with its mission of trying to “enhance the business environment, quality of life and orderly development in the greater Fox Valley area.” The association represents 220 manufacturing companies in Kane, Kendall and DeKalb counties.

“But the board also said it is sensitive to the planning Kane County has done in the western edge of the county,” Ruddy said. “We would like the land preserved, but we need a north-south rapid transportation lane.”

The association board suggested the highway be limited access to stifle development along it, and said planning emphasis should be on preserving farmland and green space in western Kane.

“We support a compromise between the position of the state and Kane County’s planning,” Ruddy said. “We would like the land preserved, but we need a north-south transportation lane.”

Colleen Ruddy, president, Valley Industrial Association

making it “a transportation corridor and not a development corridor.”

While some kind of outer-belt highway has been planned for the edge of the Chicago area for some years, it took on new life last fall when the Illinois Department of Transportation said it wanted to site a 400-foot corridor through southwestern Kane and western Kendall counties for a highway that would connect Interstates 88 and 80.

Since that time, the debate has been on as to whether or not the highway is needed, and if so, if the state should site the corridor before doing traffic tests to establish the need for the highway.

Some Kane County officials, including County Board Chairman Mike McCoy, R-Aurora, have fought IDOT’s attempts to site the corridor, saying it conflicts with Kane County’s plans to keep western Kane mainly agricultural uses and open space.
Hastert missing in controversy

Outer-belt foes say House speaker is ducking debate

By Dave Pierro
STAFF WRITER

Sitting in the living room of the house her husband painstakingly built on a piece of her family's land, Beth Talley comments that her worst enemy couldn't have done more damage to her family in planning the proposed Prairie Parkway.

The 800-foot right-of-way for the highway corridor misses her 54-year-old house on Heimer Road near Newark by a few dozen feet, awkwardly cutting her father's farm into pieces.

Looking out her bedroom window, she can see the orange flags marking the road's possible path. She can imagine the traffic that will be whizzing by 45 feet from where she sleeps.

The highway planners avoided running through her two-acre plot on the corner of the farm in order to spare her house. She says they might as well have taken it. Running the road down her father's property line would save the family farm but destroy Talley's home.

"I will sacrifice this house to keep this farm intact," Talley said. "The love of the land is ever more important to me than the house."

Like she said, even her biggest foe couldn't have dreamed up a more devastating scenario. The biggest irony for Talley is that the road wasn't the brainchild of an enemy, or even of a neutral party indifferent with the community.

The catalyst behind the concrete giant is a friend, someone the family has known for years. He's one of Kendall County's prominent figures, a leader whose brought millions of Washington dollars to a population proud of its rural character and rich farmlands -- U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert.

For the first time during his three years as the nation's third-most-powerful political figure, the Yorkville Republican is drawing intense criticism from a segment of the people he championed.

The controversy is spreading to the grass-roots level, where residents are organizing to stop the project.

With folks in Big Rock, Kaneville and other parts of western Kane County, Hastert residents have been successful in their battles.

Here is a list of some major projects western Kane County residents have organized to fight during the last 15 years that was killed after intense opposition from people in the area, as well as government resistance led by Kane County Board Chairman Mike McCarr and eventually, Residents won this one, too, after the election of George Bush (the father) in 1988, when he decided the SSC would go in Tama. A section of the farm was used
Western Kane residents know just how to protest

BEACON NEWS STAFF

When folks in Big Rock, Kaneville and other parts of western Kane County organized to fight the outer-belt highway corridor, they didn't have to go far to contact fellow fighters.

They could let their fingers do the walking.

That's because most people there probably already had plenty of names in their phone books, address books, Rolodexes or Palm Pilots from past fights.

It seems that for the last 10 to 15 years, or so, western Kane County residents have been fighting this and protesting that—taking up the cudgels against proposals they fear would destroy their part-rural, part-estate life way of life.

And for the most part, residents have been successful in their battles.

Here is a list of some major projects western Kane County residents have organized to fight during the last 15 years:

- The El Paso Merchant Electric peaking plant at Lasher and Daubermann roads in Big Rock Township. Plans for this were in the Kane County planning pipeline, and residents are fighting it on the basis that it is an inconsistent use in an otherwise farm area and that it has the potential to pollute the air. This battle is ongoing.

- The Union Pacific Railport during early 2000. Planned for land bounded by Route 38, Howard and Meredith roads; near Maple Park, the railroad wanted to build a depot where freight train cars unload their goods onto trucks for over-the-road hauling.

Resident Wins this one when the plan was killed after intense opposition from people in the area, as well as government resistance led by Kane County Board Chairman Mike McCoy and eventually crystallized by, ironically enough, Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert.

- Also ironic is the fact that one of the fears raised by people in 2000, during the railport fight, was that it would add more steam to the engine driving plans for an outer-belt highway. Now, people opposing the outer belt are fearful the highway will rekindle the flames of railport support.

- The Superconducting Super Collider, also known as the SSC, during the late 1980s. This project, tied to the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory near Batavia, was to build a large particle accelerator ring encircling a good part of Kane County.

Residents won this one, too, after the election of George Bush (the father) in 1988, when he decided the SSC would go to Texas. A portion of the large ring was built but ran out of funding and never was finished.

- A Kane County landfill, throughout the late 1980s. Kane County Board officials attempted to locate a huge landfill in northwestern Kane County, near Lily Lake. It was to take the place of Settler's Hill in Geneva when it closed. Officials saw the new landfill as bringing in revenue to the county, but residents in the area saw it as eating up a huge chunk of farmland, causing potential health problems and lessening area property values.

Residents won this battle when Kane

\* Turn to BEACON NEWS, A2
PROTEST

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County backed down in the face of opposition. Eventually, the county shifted gears entirely, saying it would never site another landfill in the county, instead looking to site transfer stations where garbage would be held for a day before being transported to a landfill somewhere else.

- The natural gas Guardian pipeline, proposed to run through Kane County by a consortium of three energy companies. Kane County residents won this by default, when Guardian decided to reroute the pipeline through DeKalb County instead.

- The E-3 campaign. OK, this is a real trivia question, because it probably is little noted nor long remembered, but western Kane Countians, particularly in St. Charles, Campton, Blackberry, Virgil and Plato townships, organized this in the late 1980s to fight what they feared would be a raft of small-lot subdivisions in the western townships.

Saying those were out of character with the already larger lots and bigger houses in the area, they fought for Kane County to plan for similar houses in the future. The E-3 stood for an estate lot zoning classification on Kane County's land-use plan at the time.

There also are some battles in parts of western Kane that are ongoing with the outerbelt battle. Some Blackberry Township and Elburn residents have protested plans for the new Metra commuter-rail station in Elburn, although that has lost steam because plans for the station are so far along.

And residents near LaFox are fighting the proposed Grand Prairie subdivision next to the settlement of LaFox. That subdivision plan is undergoing staff review in preparation for a Planning Commission hearing.

Anyone driving down LaFox Road these days between Route 38 and Keslinger Road can see plenty of anti-Grand Prairie signs.
Overwhelmingly votes him into office time and time again.

One of their biggest complaints is that Hastert has been nowhere to be found during the recent heated debate about the 33-mile highway connecting interstates 80 and 88.

"We have prayed faithfully for him as speaker of the House," Talley said. "I just feel like he turned his back on us."

Rumors flying

Hastert and his representatives have denied that support for the highway, and the speaker has been up-front for the past 22 years in saying he thinks the outer belt is necessary.

What many residents find most questionable is his disappearing act after ignoring the renewed push for the freeway ringing the Chicago metropolitan area.

Since the Illinois Department of Transportation started the corridor-protection process late last year, Hastert has not been involved in informing the public about the project.

At the very least, some residents think representatives from his office should have attended any number of public hearings and meetings. Many residents have been held to answer questions about the four-lane road.

Rumors have been flying that Hastert’s name is attached to it all over the place. So he needs to be on the scene with his office and time again.

One of their biggest complaints is that last summer the corridor protection has raised eyebrows of which have been in support of the project. And even those who opposed it, there was talk of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce that 77 percent of Kane and Kendall residents favor securing an outer-belt corridor.

Hastert said he has received a limited number of letters about the highway, the majority of which have been in support of the project. He said he has also talked to constituents as he comes back into town about once a week, and has found general support for the road. There are even residents in the
David against Goliath. Here we are — all these little — and we're going to fight the powers that be?

Beth Talley
Helena resident

...and we're going to fight the powers that be?

Beth Talley
Helena resident

highway's path who hold no ill will toward Hasting, and, compared to the population of each county, the concerns of opposition are relatively few. The Corbin family owns more than 600 acres of farmland in Plano, held between theirs and her two sons, Kenneth and Royal. Most of the land has been in family for at least 80 years, with some dating back to the early 20th century. Where roads run through the woods mid crack on the farm be fain* for decades.

PHOTOS BY STEVE JOHNSTON/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Tracy Dettmarr of Big Rock, says that, It bulB, the proposed outer belt could eclipse all their successes and pose a bigger threat to their way of life than all the other challenges combined.

"Everyone's house in the same way, they didn't talk. The marked right of way brings the road within 20 feet of her house and cuts her family's 100 acres in half. Most of her 100 acres is bordered where she grows up along the Blackberry Creek. There are also houses on the land and plans for at least one more.

"Where the road crosses the creek, Dettmar points out the100 acres to be fain* for decades.

Ken Corbin, former Kendall County Board chairman, says he sometimes questions whether the speaker has received too much of the blame for the road.

"Even if he disagrees with the highway's path — he thinks it should be moved to the east — Corbin and Hasting simply got the ball rolling on a project he 2nd 2nd converted the first too-eighthly.

The 76-year-old woman born the road, which drains all her buildings, and cuts her land disjointly, will ruin the 'draw' of the barns and outbuildings.

She fears that the small-town feel of Big Rock will be destroyed of all together.

Ken Corbin
"A new, different challenge stands next to the flag marking the Prairie Farway's path on Tracy Dettmar's front lawn.

"The dirt strip of grass along the road is high. Rocks represent the leverage of development roads in Kane and northern Kendall counties have fought over the years. The sign opposing the electric plant on the property in Dettmar's yard hasn't been taken down because residents haven't the fight yet. They've had their fair share of success, having defensive used previously a proposal for a NASA launchpad in Plano and a railroad near Maple Park. Their defense have been relatively minor, turning down a few developers and bringing the Farmers to the session, changing their mind about building.

"It's a perfect example of why people should have term limits.

Construction of a major highway..."
A tale of two counties

When Citizens Against the Sprawlway formed in late December, a good number of its founding and initial members already had experience participating in citizen campaigns against the racetrack, "peaker" power plant and railport. The highway brought them together again, this time for a much bigger challenge.

The differences between the Prairie Parkway and past development challenges, however, are significant.

Past fights focused on a single point — where the racetrack or plant would be located — not a 33-mile long area. The enemy had a definite face — NASCAR or the railroad company — instead of a number of influencing agencies.

"The difficulty of this project is that it's stretched out over such a large area," said Jan Strasma, spokesman for Citizens Against the Sprawlway. "It's hard to keep track of the projects as they move forward."

The highway brought Strasma together again, this time for a much bigger challenge.

The resident opposition in Kane County is more solidified with Strasma's campaign in full swing, but the real difference in interests is evident politically. While many Kane County officials have been staunchly opposed to the highway, Kendall County politicians have been noticeably silent.

"We've had too much faith in Dennis throughout the years," said Talley. "I can't imagine he would ever become one of my enemies."

Contact Dave Parro at (630) 801-5495 or dparro@scnl.com.