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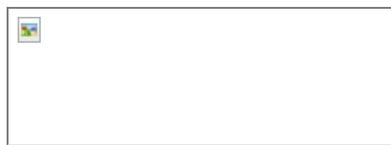
LOCAL NEWS AND VIDEOS FROM GRUNDY COUNTY, ILLINOIS

**Today's Forecast**



**52°** Feels like: 52°  
Wind: 13 E  
Humidity: 88 %

**Forecasts, Radar & Conditions**



Created: Monday, May 3, 2010 8:32 a.m. CDT

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## Will Board backs Illiana Expressway

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JOLIET – The Will County Board is adding its support to the Illiana Expressway project by requesting the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning GoTo2040 Plan include the interstate highway in its major capital projects list.

“It’s important for the project to be included in CMAP’s GoTo2040 plan so that it can get the serious attention it deserves,” said Jim Bilotta (R-Lockport), chairman of the Transportation Committee. “This affects everyone in the region.”

Board members approved a resolution stating the Illiana Expressway is a “much needed interstate highway” that will “increase accessibility to both jobs and housing by reducing congestion on one of the main arteries of the nation’s interstate system, I-80.”

The Illiana was first conceived by famed architect Daniel Burnham more than a century ago. It would link Interstate 65 in Indiana with I-55 in Illinois, although the exact route has not been determined.

The project has never progressed beyond the discussion stage, but with increased traffic on I-80 and US 30, plans for another intermodal freight yard and the proposed South Suburban Airport near Peotone, the highway has gained renewed attention.

“We need this expressway to handle future transportation growth, reduce congestion and create thousands of new jobs,” said Joe Babich (D-Joliet), a member of the board’s Transportation Committee. Babich also serves on the National Association of Counties’ Transportation Steering Committee.

“Including the Illiana Expressway in the GoTo2040 Plan will help ensure federal funding will be available for the project,” Babich continued. “This is an important step.”

Governor Quinn has expressed support for the Illiana. The Illinois Department of Transportation has included \$50 million in next year’s budget for design studies for the expressway.

Most experts agree that engineering and environmental studies would take years to complete, prompting board members to act now and avoid even further delays. Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels recently signed legislation to create a public-private partnership to build the Indiana portion of the project.

CMAP in January released its preferred Regional Scenario. Projects to be included in the final plan follow two years of research, analysis and public input. Implementation of the final plan is set to begin in the fall.

The Illiana Expressway is currently not included in CMAP’s constrained major capital projects list. The list is designed to guide growth and funding decisions through the middle of this century.

CMAP is the comprehensive regional planning organization for the northeastern Illinois counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will. By state and federal law, CMAP is responsible for producing the region’s official, integrated plan for land use and transportation.

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In a roundabout way, Chicago coach Joel Quenneville's decision to deactivate Troy Brouwer Wednesday night paid immediate dividends for the Blackhawks.

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This might not be true if they hadn't demoted Jeff Samardzija, but the Chicago Cubs actually played a team with worse relief pitching than their own this weekend.

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