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A glimpse into future transportation

By Jim Jaworski/Triblocal.com reporter

Village officials are asking Oak Park residents to get involved in a transportation study that will set priorities on highway and Metra projects for coming decades.

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning recently released a comprehensive long-range study and will begin public comment meetings next month. Many projects will have a direct impact on Oak Park — such as work on I-290 and a possible extension of the CTA Blue Line.

"If people wait until they hear the bulldozers running, then they are too late," said Oak Park Assistant Village Manager Rob Cole.

Details on the plan, titled Go To 2040, are available at www.goto2040.org. Citizens can download the entire plan and see itemized lists of potential projects. The closest public hearing is scheduled from 6 to 8 p.m. July 20 at the Cicero Community Center, 2250 S. 49th Ave.

The study separates future projects into two categories. The first, called fiscally constrained projects, are considered high-priority. These projects are mostly improvements to existing transportation infrastructure. The second category, fiscally unconstrained projects, is mostly new infrastructure projects.

Cole said the biggest transportation issue in Oak Park is the lack of mass transit heading west. While public transportation to and from the city is readily available, there are not many good options to get to and from west Cook County and DuPage County.

One remedy that has been discussed for years is the combination of an extension of the Blue Line at least to Oak Brook — and possibly all the way to Lisle — and the creation of a bus rapid transit system through DuPage, nicknamed the "J" Line.

Both projects are listed as unconstrained projects and would not be treated with the same priority. Cole said he would like to see plans that focus on public transportation and not simply highway or roadway expansion — and not just for the good of Oak Park.

"A lot of people are upset about the (gulf oil spill)," he said. "A lot of people are blaming BP and want to issue a moratorium on offshore drilling. I can agree with that. But the reality is that this isn't going to change unless we change the way we think about transportation."

Keywords

Blue Line extension, Oak Park, I-290, transportation

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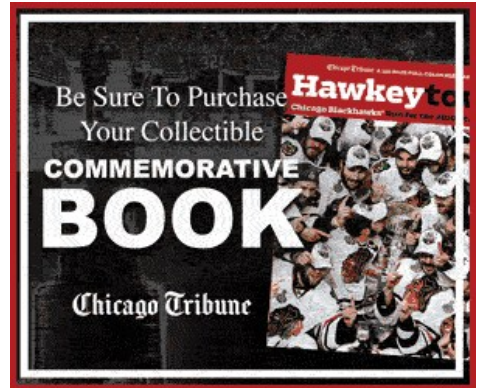
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