

## O'Hare western access gets \$69 million federal boost

November 13, 2013

Plans for long-proposed western access to O'Hare International Airport got a fair-sized push today with the news that \$69 million in federal money has been obtained for the extension of the Elgin-O'Hare tollway to the western edge of the airfield.

Officials in DuPage County, which hopes to gain tons of new business investment from western access, announced that they obtained the funds from an air quality improvement program run by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, which administers certain federal funds.

Together with some other recent grants, DuPage County Chairman Dan Cronin said local officials have closed about a third of the \$300 million gap needed to complete the project. The Illinois Tollway has pledged \$3.1 billion, but the locals are responsible for the \$300 million match.

Today's news was not a huge surprise, since **federal officials earlier in the year OK'd** converting the existing Elgin-O'Hare freeway to a toll road. But it certainly helps.

"Through an unprecedented collaboration, the county and the region have agreed to make western access a priority as we seek additional funding through a variety of resources," Mr. Cronin said in a statement.

Added tollway Executive Director Kristi Lafleur, "We remain committed to continuing to work together to fund all elements of this \$3.4 billion project."

The money specifically will go toward replacement of the current Interstate 290 intersection with Thorndale Avenue, a new Union Pacific rail bridge at Touhy Avenue and improvements at the Touhy Avenue/Elmhurst Road intersection.

Of course, for DuPage really to benefit, some way will have to be found to get passengers from O'Hare's western edge to the terminals, which are all clumped to the east. No word on that at the moment.

**Update** — Mr. Cronin, in an interview, says the remaining \$200 million would come from villages, cities, the state and perhaps others. "It's an eight-year (construction) project and we're a third of the way there," he said. "I'm very optimistic."

Mr. Cronin was just as chipper, but somewhat more vague, about getting people from the end of the road to the east-side terminals. "I firmly believe that the city of Chicago will not ignore the opportunity to boost (O'Hare) revenues, given that tens of thousands of cars a day will be driving to the west end," he said.

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Until the western terminal is built, this is a road to nowhere!!!

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**Harvey K.** 98 days ago

Depending on tolls on the Elgin - O'Hare for a western access to O'Hare will not encourage suburban and State officials to fund competing rail connections to O'Hare.

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**ROBERT B.** 98 days ago

How in the hell does this project improve air quality? Somebody please explain to me how we're getting \$69M worth of air quality benefits out of this project.

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