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Tollway awards contract to study Highway 53 extension proposal

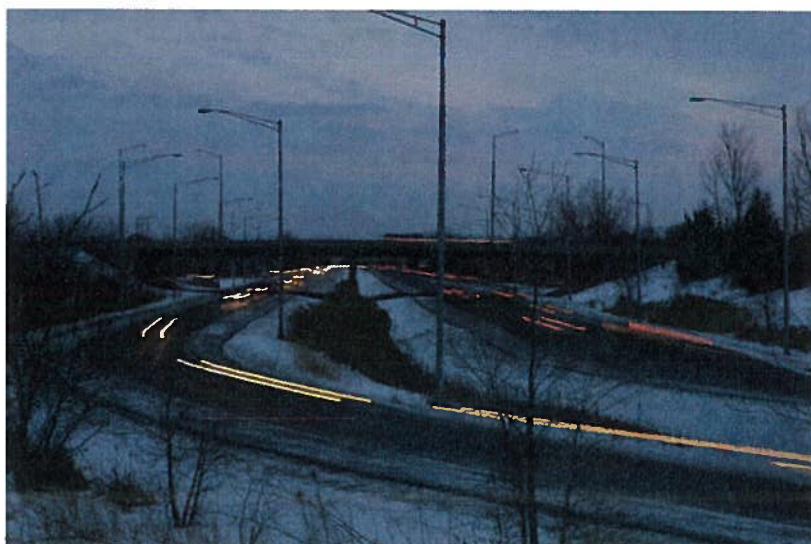


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The north end of Route 53 where cars are exiting onto westbound Lake Cook Road in Long Grove. It is from this exit that officials are proposing to extend Route 53 up to Route 120. (Tribune file photo)

By Richard Wronski
Tribune reporter

2:53 p.m. CST, February 20, 2013

An Illinois Tollway committee today recommended awarding a \$4 million contract award to Schaumburg-based TranSystems Corp. to continue planning for the proposed extension of Illinois Highway 53/120 in Lake County.

The contract will develop a detailed engineering concept, evaluate cost estimates, refine traffic and revenue analyses and survey customers' willingness to pay tolls on the proposed extension, the tollway said.

The contract also includes services to study the environmental and economic impacts of the project.

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Work is expected to take 18 months to complete.

The full tollway board of directors is expected to approve the contract with TranSystems Corp. at its Feb. 28 meeting.

The consulting contract follows up on the recommendations from a Route 53 advisory council, whose report was issued last year. Its report recommended that the tollway proceed with further development of Highway 53 as a four-lane, 45-mph tolled "parkway." The report also outlined the scope, configuration and design elements of the new roadway and proposed a financial framework for the project.

Another recommendation from the advisory council was development of a coordinated land-use plan. Lake County and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) are working to advance the land use plan through CMAP's Local Technical Assistance program, the tollway said.

Each municipality along the corridor will help develop a plan for land use, transportation, economic development and open space. The corridor plan process is expected to be underway by mid-2013, the tollway said.

The Highway 53/120 extension is expected to cost between \$2.3 and \$2.7 billion. Cost estimates developed as part of the detailed engineering concept will inform future discussions on how to finance the project and potential sources of revenue. This could include local and other sources, as recommended by the advisory council.

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