

# McHenry County Board vote keeps Randall Road project alive

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Caption



Caption



Caption



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By KEVIN P. CRAVER - [kcraver@shawmedia.com](mailto:kcraver@shawmedia.com)

**WOODSTOCK** – The Randall Road widening and improvement [project](#) has a second lease on life following a McHenry County Board vote to go ahead with buying more land for right-of-way.

After an hour of debate Tuesday morning, board members voted, 14-8, to [allocate another \\$10 million](#) for land acquisition to widen the busy corridor in [Lake in the Hills](#) and [Algonquin](#) and improve its intersection with Algonquin Road. The project has been on the county’s list of needed improvements for more than a decade.

While obtaining right-of-way is usually a mundane component of government road projects, Tuesday’s vote became a referendum on the project. Opponents who have questioned the project’s scope, price tag or outright questioned the need at all sought to block it with a “no” vote – the inability to buy all of the needed land effectively would have killed the project.

Leaders from both Lake in the Hills and Algonquin have pleaded with the County Board for months not to kill the project, with mounting frustration over the project’s fate. Lake in the Hills Village President Paul Mulcahy and Trustee Russ Ruzanski made one last pitch before the debate.

“Please, just do what is necessary, do what is proper, do what is right and approve this project,” Mulcahy said.

The \$65.7 million first phase that was the basis of Tuesday's vote calls for widening Randall Road to six lanes from Harnish Drive in Algonquin north to Polaris Drive in Lake in the Hills, and improving its busy intersection with Algonquin Road by adding more turn lanes and eliminating some entry points. The plan would add a second left-turn lane on Randall Road and a third on Algonquin Road.

Video: Strategists break down unprecedented U.S. election



With \$9 million already spent and \$10.6 million pledged by the federal government in congestion mitigation and air quality funding, the remaining price tag for the first phase is closer to \$46.1 million. The amount spent to date includes \$5 million allocated in 2014 for buying the needed land.

The second phase, which currently is not on the county's list of improvements, would finish widening Randall Road to six lanes from Polaris Drive north to Ackman Road for a total project cost of at least \$90 million.

The project came to the County Board on a split decision from its committees. While its Finance and Audit Committee [recommended approval](#) on a 4-2 vote, its Transportation Committee [recommended against it](#) by the same margin.

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Randall Road ended up in a committee logjam that lasted two months. Transportation first voted in April against allocating the money, but Finance did not vote and instead sent it back to Transportation until mid-June.

The first vote Tuesday, proposed by members Michael Rein, R-Woodstock, and Chuck Wheeler, R-[McHenry](#), was to send it back again to Transportation. Members voted, also 14-8, against doing so.

While opponents said too many questions still exist on the Randall Road project, supporters argued that they have been asked and answered for years. Transportation Committee Chairwoman Anna May Miller, R-[Cary](#), called the attempt to send it back “simply another manipulation of people opposed to this project to delay it.”

“It’s over, it’s done, and this is exactly why government gets the reputation it deserves,” said Carolyn Schofield, R-[Crystal Lake](#), regarding the failed motion.

Wheeler is one of several members who question the safety of three left-turn lanes on Algonquin Road. Others, including Nick Provenzano, R-McHenry, have questioned the return on the taxpayers’ investment.

“We’re going to spend \$100 million to go from an F [rated road] to a D, and [engineers] want us to take their word on that, that it will be just fine for 30 years,” Provenzano said.

Work on the project is expected to start next year.

## OUTBOX

### How they voted

The McHenry County Board voted Tuesday, 14-8, to spend another \$10 million on land acquisition for the Randall Road widening and improvement project.

Voting yes were Carolyn Schofield, R-Crystal Lake, Michael Skala, R-Huntley, Michele Aavang, R-Woodstock, Yvonne Barnes, R-Cary, Sue Draffkorn, R-Wonder Lake, James Heisler, R-Crystal Lake, Tina Hill, R-Woodstock, John Jung, R-Woodstock, Don Kopsell, R-Crystal Lake, Donna Kurtz, R-Crystal Lake, Robert Martens Sr., R-Spring Grove, Mary McCann, R-Woodstock, Anna May Miller, R-Cary, and Chairman Joe Gottemoller, R-Crystal Lake.

Voting no were Nick Provenzano, R-McHenry, Michael Rein, R-Woodstock, Larry Smith, R-Harvard, Jeff Thorsen, R-Crystal Lake, Chuck Wheeler, R-McHenry, Diane Evertsen, R-Harvard, Andrew Gasser, R-Fox River Grove, and John Hammerand, R-Wonder Lake.

Members Robert Nowak, R-Lake in the Hills, and Michael Walkup, R-Crystal Lake, were absent. Skala participated by telephone.

