

# Lincolnwood pushes forward \$2.5M plan to overhaul 'problematic' intersection near Edens ramp

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A plan for a \$2.5 million road-widening project aimed at smoothing traffic through the intersection of Touhy and Cicero avenues took a step toward reality Jan. 16, as the Lincolnwood Village Board voted to approve state funding for a design proposal.

Faced with heavy traffic on Cicero Avenue that can back up onto the Edens Expressway during rush hours, Lincolnwood officials began exploring ways to widen the northbound Edens off-ramp for traffic headed east on Touhy Avenue in 2016, according to the village's Public Works Director Andrew Letson.

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Officials also want to add a right-turn-only lane for cars turning onto Touhy from Cicero, Letson said.

"When you have such a high volume of traffic from the highway trying to make two turns onto Touhy, it creates a bottleneck and makes that stretch of Cicero really problematic," Letson said. "Touhy is a major arterial road, and when it gets backed up it affects not just everyone in town, but everyone going through it as well."

With about 40,000 daily trips, Touhy Avenue is one of the busiest state-operated roads that isn't an expressway, Letson added.

The road is run by the Illinois Department of Transportation.

Village and state officials are hoping to score a Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement grant to fund the multimillion-dollar project. Lincolnwood tapped the same federal program to pay for a \$4.5 million bike overpass set to open above Touhy Avenue this summer, according to village officials.

But before the village can apply for the grant, officials need to hire engineers to draw up a final design for the proposal.

IDOT offered up \$75,000 for the job, and the village got another \$175,000 through Cook County's new Invest in Cook infrastructure grant program.

Last year, during the county's inaugural round of funding, the Touhy-Cicero project was one of 41 projects awarded grants, according to John Yonan, the county's superintendent for transportation.

The project caught the eye of county officials due to its potential to help shepherd pedestrians, not just cars, through the crowded intersection, Yonan said.

"You have such a great continuous stretch of businesses along Cicero there, that it turns all those drivers into pedestrians after they park," Yonan said. "So allowing that intersection some wider sidewalks could be a major enhancement...and we're excited to work with Lincolnwood to help make that happen."

Officials are aiming to finalize a design by the end of the year, Letson said.

*Alex Nitkin is a freelance reporter.*