

January 16, 2003

Dear Village Manager and Trustees,

My name is Mary Ann Kaufman. I am an advocate of Context Sensitive Solutions and Smart Growth. Earlier this month, I was able to meet with IDOT engineers Jarrod Cebulski and John Baczek to review IDOT's design and explore open issues with them. My purpose was to discuss traffic calming options for Route 53. The following comments reflect my understanding of where IDOT is in finalizing a design and the importance of your input in the upcoming Phase I meetings.

The goals of traffic calming are to make the road safer, more enjoyable for those who drive while leaving a softer impact on those that live along the route in terms of less noise, increased safety and better aesthetic value which promotes livability. Good traffic calming design promotes good driving behavior.

Lombard's corridor

IDOT's design for Route 53 from North Avenue to St. Charles Road is a four-lane divided road with painted median to allow cars a refuge for left-turns. The design for Route 53 from St. Charles to Surrey Drive is a five-lane road with TWLTL.

IDOT is willing to take input on at least the following design features.

1. Width of traffic lanes.

The Federal Highway Administration in their studies have found that 10-foot lane widths instead of 12-foot lane widths reduce the overall speed of traffic by 5 miles an hour no matter what the radius of curvature of the road.

2. Use of, and setback for, Sidewalks.

The present plan shows a 3-foot setback from the road. Five-feet is the Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines for arterials with traffic moving faster than 40 mph. This is doable without having to purchase significantly more land if the traffic lanes on Route 53 were also narrowed to 10-feet in width. Studies have shown that even if sidewalks are provided, foot traffic does not occur if pedestrians feel the sidewalks are too close to a busy street which makes them a waste of concrete if improperly placed.

3. Use of Vegetation



Courtesy MN/DOT

Use of naturally vegetated boulevards, which can include native trees, has several advantages.

- a) Native plants are hardy and salt resistant.
- b) Native plants do not obstruct vision of drivers and pedestrians since they do not grow to be of significantly bothersome height.

- c) Native plants help with water runoff in heavy rains. Less water on the roads, less water trying to funnel into the drainage systems helps with flooding and slickness on concrete surfaces.
- d) Native vegetation is low maintenance. It is cut once a year and left alone. Native vegetation includes not only grasses of various shades and textures but flowering plants. They promote beauty and wildlife, like butterflies and hummingbirds. Native flowering plants tend to bloom longer into the season and late fall. Combined with ornamentals, they can be a breathtaking show. IDOT has on staff landscape architects with an impressive knowledge of native plants and hardier ornamentals. Landscaping lends to roadside beauty so drivers will want to linger more. Studies in human behavior have shown that people hurry through areas that are unpleasant and linger where there is perceived beauty.

4. **Lighting:** As of now, no lighting is planned on Route 53. With today’s bright car headlights and close proximity of homes to the road this is not completely undesirable. However, if streetlights are wanted, then attention must be paid to keep them as low and directed onto the road as possible.

The reasons are:

- 1. Keep light focused to prevent shining through windows throughout the night.
- 2. Lower light “ceilings” at night tend to promote slower driving speeds. Yet the road is well lit. These “lower lights” can be ornamental as well.
- 3. Less light pollution. Low level directed lights do not have to be as bright as higher more intense lighting fixtures.

5. **Type of Median.**

Just south of North Avenue is an 18 to 30 foot wide median. This can be a “park like” vegetated planting area with trees and ornamentals in the middle because they are less tolerant of salt. An example of an ornamental plant is a dwarf lilac. This is also a “gate way” opportunity. “Welcome to Lombard”



CSS_Forum

6. **Use of Colored Concrete.**

Varying the color of the concrete used adds to the illusion of a narrower cross section to promote slower driving by contrasting the curb color to lane color to median color. IDOT stated that this could be done easily with concrete. They can dye it from red to black and everything in between. It is harder to contrast a



Pedestrian/bicycle library

median in black top. Almost impossible in fact. Concrete can even be tinted black, which would help keep the roads free of ice. Paint under the right conditions tends to “disappear” to the driver’s eyes. This would also promote safety by more clearly marking where the lanes are. Differences in the color of concrete do not disappear at night when the roads are wet.

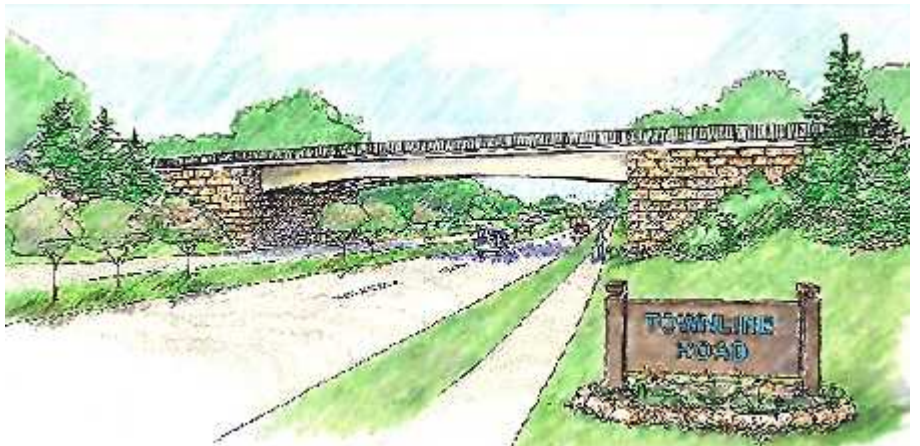
7. Use of textured pavement.

To discourage driving in the painted medians or TWLTL sections, “roughen” the texture or use other methods to make drivers not wish to drive on it but still be agreeable to them for turning motions.

8. School bus stops areas.



Yellow diamond shape signs saying “School Bus Stop Ahead” with lights that flash only during those periods of the day when buses are picking up or dropping off students. This would warn drivers in the outer lanes of the need to be more alert and wary and to reduce speed in preparation to stop.



Courtesy Mn/DOT

9. Bridgework for the Great Western Trail.

The changes in bridge height and sidewalk connectors for the Great Western Trail are breathtaking. They’ve done a great job. And I think Lombard will be pleased. Still, the bridge itself could use some input as far as parapets (their shape, height, and color), type of railing treatments, etc. The bridge can also be designed with planters along the railings. The plants would have to be maintained by the village. Lombard has an excellent garden club and other horticulture savvy people. It would be possible if Lombard was willing to take that on as a public works to “strut it’s stuff” to those people new to the area while being a continuing sense of pride to residents. IDOT is open to it. Again, traffic slows in areas that are scenic.



Eugene, OR

Raised, Textured Pedestrian Crossing 1

10. Colored, Raised, Pedestrian Crosswalks.

- a. There are pedestrian crossing safety concerns at the St. Charles Rd/Route 53 intersection. The intersection is wider, corner to corner. It will be harder to get across with no pedestrian refuges. East to west foot travel across Route 53 at the intersection is unlikely. However, north to south foot travel is not unlikely. Sunset Park and the Prairie Path and Trail are both attractors to foot traffic. Raised crosswalks allow pedestrians to be seen more easily by drivers and slow cars as they drive through the crosswalk area.



NCHRP Report 480 Colored Concrete Design along roadway.

- b. *St. Charles is the Gateway to Lombard.* Gateways are a new idea in Arterials. They set a sense of place. One such treatment on the St. Charles/Route53 intersection would be to place into the road, a symbolic design that represents Lombard. Perhaps the village seal. Or some other patterned design. This is possible for them to do, but cost might need to be looked at on their part.

11. Signalizing Meadow Lane.

IDOT has not committed to signalization of Meadow Lane/Route 53 intersection. They are committed to doing the traffic studies that are necessary before doing signalization for any intersection. Lombard may get a signal or not depending on the study results.

12. Speed Limits.



Traffic Calming: State of the Practice TRB

Consider lowering the speed limit to 35 mph. The villages have jurisdiction over this area. Pedestrians and cyclists when hit at speeds over 35 mph have a 90% fatality rate. Considering the aging population in DuPage County, the closeness of the road to homes, the fact that pedestrian traffic comprises of mostly school aged children, I think it would be wise to think about it. I discussed this with IDOT and IDOT is ok with it as a possibility if strong enforcement is committed to in writing. The purpose of traffic calming is so that the natural inclination of the driver would be to drive at speeds from 35 to 40 miles per hour. Enforcing would be a lot easier. Otherwise, it is not going to work as well.

Glen Ellyn's Corridor

From Surrey Drive to Roosevelt Road the Route 53's design is a four-lane divided road with six-foot wide concrete median. Most of the traffic calming ideas above are also recommended for south of St. Charles to Roosevelt with a few additions.

Sidewalks

I have strongly urged for sidewalk facilities on both sides because of the resident's needs on Surrey Drive. There is neither signal nor stop signs planned for Surrey Drive because of line of sight problems created by the I-355 overpass. This might pose problems for the residents of Surrey Drive to get out of their subdivision.

Please note that these are disadvantaged people.

- § English is not the first language for a significant percentage of residents on Surrey Drive.
- § Many can't afford two cars. Some have a reason that has precludes them from having a license. Some work second-shift jobs. There are single parent families.
- § Children are left to deal with the outside world as interpreters for their parents and/or are left on foot or bikes to try to get to parks and recreation facilities.
- § I lived there for 6 years. I know well the problems on Surrey Drive.

The federal Highway Administration under their Environmental Justice Acts dictates that road projects should not "cut off" residents from access to facilities they are entitled to. The Glen Ellyn Park District, which they are residents of, is one such facility. Since they can't get across the road at Surrey because of line of sight problems for the IDOT engineers, they need those sidewalks on their side of the street as well. There is still the issue of the lack of safe egress from their subdivision by car either onto Roosevelt or Route 53 should five lanes go in. But that is between IDOT and the FHWA. However, as Glen Ellyn is the municipality that represents them, then Glen Ellyn should also make sure that every possible consideration that is given to any other residential area of the village, be given to Surrey Drive residents as well. It's a matter of environmental justice.

Floating Boardwalk—Pedestrian/bicycle Library



I strongly recommend a "boardwalk" type of sidewalk that goes farther from the road and close to the scenic wetlands as possible. People can enjoy being away from traffic and more easily appreciate the scenic beauty of the area. People already go there a lot. I see them with fishing poles and walking. Kids biking and discovering frogs. The foot traffic is already there. How beautiful it would be for walking in the cool of the evening to stroll on a boardwalk. Perhaps protected bench shelters in places for people to appreciate what many fight so hard to restore, protect and maintain. I understand that this may involve the Forest Preserve as well. But as CSS Advocate, I do not find this unusual for different agencies to work together for the common good. We need to foster an appreciation of the natural resources we have. IDOT is game if the proper agencies get involved.



A Landscaped Median I-35E St. Paul, MN

Flexibility in Highway Design



The planned concrete 6-foot median on this section of Route 53 is not context sensitive. Rather than more cement perhaps native plantings would be more appropriate. Native plants also include native trees, which can be put beside the road if necessary. Wetlands occasionally have trees as well. For a listing, please consult Ray Ribich for a place to start and possible ideas. He is a licensed arborist and is currently involved in restoration ecology.

Concluding Comments about the Design Plans

Please remember that what is passed at the public hearing can seal the doors of Phase I. IDOT is coming to the hearing with a four-lane divided (median is at least 6 feet concrete/ or painted) and five-lane plan from North Avenue to Roosevelt Road. It may not be built immediately. But passage of the design at public hearing locks in the design. IDOT does not traditionally change Phase I studies after public hearing. The time to submit design recommendations to IDOT is now. After this, IDOT is not obligated to consider proposed design changes.

IDOT engineers need to be asked for these things by the villages in order to promote them to IDOT management. They are not allowed to “lead” the stakeholder. But they do believe in traffic calming. It must be asked for by the Villages in order for the ideas to get the recognition and weight it deserves in final design. In other words, please be proactive with IDOT on this. Get involved. The designs are currently 90 to 95 percent complete. Traffic calming any roadway is important for the increased safety and comfort of not only the residents but also the drivers. Accidents are reduced significantly in number and severity. Traffic calming tools can be applied to no-builds as well and would be appropriate measures to take. There are more traffic calming tools available than is listed in this document.

Priority requests, using the traffic calming ideas mentioned above as examples, are the narrowing of the through-lanes to 10-feet and the placement of sidewalks farther than three feet from the curb. Other issues like the color of the concrete treatments can wait until after the meetings with the villages. IDOT is planning to meet with the villages in 21 to 30 days. Public hearing will be in 60 to 120 days. Traffic calming requests that IDOT needs sooner than thirty days would be those that would dictate changes in the road configuration or right-of-way.



Traffic Calming : State of the Practice

The ultimate traffic calming design for Route 53 is a three-lane road for addressing speeding, weaving and pedestrian safety concerns. But for now that seems to be off of IDOT's agenda. These are measures that may get a degree of acceptance. Many can be applied to any cross section, no-builds, three lanes or larger roadways. So even if the design agreement is up in the air going to public hearing, traffic-calming measures are still a valid request.

Thank you all for your consideration of these design ideas which can make Route 53 a safer, better looking and more functional roadway. As always I wish the best of luck to you on this project.

Sincerely,

Mary Kaufman