

# ELGIN O'HARE WESTERN ACCESS



## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q. WHAT IS THE ELGIN O'HARE WESTERN ACCESS (EOWA) PROJECT?

The EOWA Project consists of construction of a new, all-electronic Tollway around the western border of O'Hare International Airport linking the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway (I-90) and the Tri-State Tollway (I-294), as well as extending the Elgin O'Hare Expressway east along Thorndale Avenue to O'Hare and rehabilitating and widening the existing Elgin O'Hare Expressway from Illinois Route 19 to Meacham/Medinah Road. The 2013-2025 construction plan is broadly supported by local governments and represents a fiscally responsible approach for addressing the area's diverse travel needs - improving travel efficiency, providing new western access to O'Hare, enhancing multi-modal connections and reducing congestion. The project includes:

- Adding two lanes to the existing Elgin O'Hare Expressway between Illinois Route 19 and Meacham/Medinah Road and converting to a toll road with minor interchange improvements at Illinois Route 19 and Roselle Road and an improved interchange at Meacham/Medinah Road.
- Extending the Elgin O'Hare Expressway east as a toll road. Constructing or improving interchanges at Illinois Route 53 (Rohlwing Road), I-290, Park Boulevard/Arlington Heights Road/Prospect Avenue, Wood Dale Road and Illinois Route 83.
- Provide direct access to O'Hare Airport property from York Road via a new ramp crossing over York Road and the Union Pacific Railroad and Canadian Pacific Railway.
- Enhance southern access to O'Hare via a new, four-lane Taft Avenue Connector between Illinois Route 19 and Franklin Avenue with a new crossing over the Bensenville Rail Yard.
- Constructing a new toll road connecting I-90 and I-294 west of O'Hare. Constructing interchanges at I-294, County Line Road/Franklin Avenue, Illinois Route 19, the Elgin O'Hare extension, Illinois Route 72 and I-90.
- Constructing a new, full-access interchange at I-90 and Elmhurst Road.
- Providing new access at I-294 and Illinois Route 64 via County Line Road.
- Accommodating express bus service in mixed traffic along the corridor. Bus service will be implemented by other agencies.

### Q. HOW WILL ACCESS TO O'HARE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT BE IMPROVED?

The project will provide direct access to O'Hare Airport property from York Road via a new ramp crossing over York Road and the Union Pacific Railroad and Canadian Pacific Railway. The project will also accommodate a future ramp connection directly from the EOWA to the west side of O'Hare, as well as enhanced access from the south via a new Taft Avenue Connector over the Bensenville Rail Yard between Franklin Avenue and Irving Park Road.

### Q. HOW WILL THE AFFECTED COMMUNITIES ENGAGE IN THE PROJECT AS IT MOVES FORWARD?

As part of the project, the Illinois Tollway has created a Local Advisory Committee (LAC) to address issues related to the project and construction, such as noise, aesthetics, landscaping, property access and use, drainage and utilities. Each of the 19 communities and townships along the EOWA Project corridor has been asked to designate a member on the committee. In addition, both Cook and DuPage counties have designated a representative to serve as a special liaison to the committee.



For more information,  
visit [www.illinoistollway.com](http://www.illinoistollway.com)



## Q. HOW WILL THE TOLLWAY KEEP THE COMMUNITY, RESIDENTS, AND USERS INFORMED ABOUT THE PROJECT?

In addition to LAC meetings, information about the project will be made available on the Tollway's website ([www.illinoistollway.com](http://www.illinoistollway.com)) and public meetings will be held within the project corridor at key milestones.

## Q. HOW MUCH WILL THE PROJECT COST TO CONSTRUCT AND IS THE FUNDING IN PLACE?

The estimated cost of the project is \$3.4 billion. The Illinois Tollway will be implementing the project as part of its 15-year, \$12 billion capital program, *Move Illinois: The Illinois Tollway Driving the Future*, which commits \$3.1 billion toward the project. Funding sources to close the remaining \$300 million gap have yet to be determined. DuPage County has taken the lead and is working with local officials and the Tollway to identify potential local, state and federal funding sources to close the funding gap.

## Q. WHEN WILL THE PROJECT BE CONSTRUCTED?

Construction of the project could begin as early as 2013 and would extend through 2025. While the construction plan will be refined as the Tollway continues project design, the general sequencing includes: widening of the existing Elgin O'Hare Expressway and upgrading the I-90/Elmhurst Road Interchange to provide a full-access interchange, followed by the extension of the Elgin O'Hare Expressway. When the Elgin O'Hare construction is complete, construction would begin on the south leg extending from the Elgin O'Hare to I-294, with the final piece being the north leg extending from the Elgin O'Hare to I-90. The phasing of the improvements is intended to provide the most benefit to the public as early as possible while complementing other Tollway improvements on adjacent facilities such as I-90 and I-294.

## Q. WHEN WILL THE PROJECT OPEN?

The EOWA Project will open in three major segments. The first segment, the widening and extension of the existing Elgin O'Hare Expressway to I-290 will open in late 2015. The second section will extend the Elgin O'Hare Expressway to Illinois Route 83 and will be fully open to drivers in 2018. The final section of the project is construction of the north-south Western Access leg and will be complete by 2025. As usable pieces of the Western Access toll road are completed, they will be opened to drivers.

## Q. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT?

The project will save drivers time by reducing traffic on local roads by more than 16 percent during rush hour and reducing delays on local roads by 24 percent. The improved facility will accommodate approximately three times as many vehicles per day as local roads carry now, and will save drivers more than seven minutes on the 11-mile trip between the west side of O'Hare Airport and U.S. Route 20/Lake Avenue – a savings of 25 percent.

In addition, the project provides economic benefits including saving drivers \$145 million in time and fuel annually by 2040, and will create or sustain as many as 36,000 total jobs related to the EOWA Project, and yield as many as 65,000 direct and indirect jobs by 2040 when combined with completion of the western terminal at O'Hare International Airport.

## Q. HOW MUCH WILL TOLLS BE AND HOW WILL TOLLS BE COLLECTED?

The EOWA will feature an all-electronic tolling system. It is currently estimated that the rate will be approximately 20 cents per mile for passenger cars. All-electronic tolling is faster, safer and more convenient. For the Tollway, all-electronic toll collection allows us to reduce the project's footprint by not having to build both all-electronic and cash lanes. Specific details, such as tolling locations, are currently under consideration. Tolling along the EOWA would start no sooner than 2015.



## **Q. WHAT IF PEOPLE CAN'T AFFORD I-PASS?**

Understanding that the standard upfront cost of I-PASS (\$50) may be a burden for some budgets, the Tollway designed I-PASS Assist so that income-eligible drivers can easily and affordably obtain I-PASS. I-PASS Assist allows eligible drivers to obtain I-PASS and replenish their accounts at a rate of \$20. Tollway customers enrolled in Medicaid or who qualify for food stamps can participate in I-PASS Assist.

## **Q. IS TRANSIT PART OF THE PROJECT?**

The project provides for express bus service along the east-west portion of the EOWA, which is being designed to accommodate future transit options. While the Illinois Department of Transportation and the Tollway are planning for these facilities, they would be constructed and maintained by other agencies.

## **Q. WHY IS THE EAST-WEST PORTION OF THE EOWA PROJECT PROPOSED FOR CONSTRUCTION BEFORE THE NORTH-SOUTH SEGMENT?**

The phasing of the improvements is intended to provide the most benefit to the public as early as possible while complementing other Tollway improvements on adjacent facilities such as I-90 and I-294.

## **Q. IF YOU NEED MY PROPERTY, WHEN WILL YOU BE BUYING RIGHT-OF-WAY?**

Since this project has long been planned, IDOT already owns a significant portion of land along the existing Thorndale Avenue corridor. Since last March, IDOT has been contacting affected property owners about impacts to their properties and has begun some property acquisitions. Once the final government authorizations are in place, the Tollway will begin purchasing additional land needed for this project. Additional land acquisition will generally be compatible with the project's overall construction schedule.

## **Q. ARE "GREEN" INITIATIVES BEING CONSIDERED AS PART OF THE PROJECT?**

The Tollway is committed to "building green" and minimizing the environmental impact of construction by reducing, recycling and reusing materials. In addition, the EOWA project will feature the restoration, enhancement and protection of wetlands to increase the quality and quantity of the state's wetland resources. The project will implement best management practices to address water quality and manage stormwater runoff during construction, operation and maintenance of the roadway. The project will also include environmental features such as implementation of noise walls and pavement surface treatments that will reduce traffic noise. Sustainable practices will be considered to the extent reasonable in all aspects of project implementation and will utilize Governor Quinn's Elgin O'Hare Advisory Council's final report recommendations for the development and guidance on sustainability initiatives.

## **Q. HOW LONG IS THE EOWA PROJECT?**

The EOWA Project provides 16 miles of new toll roads including improvements to the existing Elgin O'Hare Expressway, extension of the Elgin O'Hare Expressway to the east and construction of north-south facility connecting the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway (I-90) and the Tri-State Tollway (I-294) west of O'Hare International Airport.