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## from the strategic advisory team

The Illinois Tollway has successfully completed the majority of its Congestion-Relief Program, including completion of open road tolling, critical expansion through the widening of key sections of roadway and construction of the 12.5-mile extension of the Veterans Memorial Tollway. It is working to bring the 12-year capital program to a close by bringing the entire system into a state of good repair. It has achieved these results while maintaining a sound financial position.

As this phase of its activity nears completion, the Tollway is in a position to consider new opportunities. It can reinvent itself as more than an agency that makes "transportation" decisions and collects money which it reinvests in its system. Indeed, it can define its role as a leader of planning, economic development and environmental integrity in the region. This report highlights the Strategic Advisory Team's recommendations to help guide the Tollway as it begins to build a framework for future initiatives.

In April 2010, newly appointed Illinois Tollway Executive Director Kristi Lafleur created an ad hoc Strategic Advisory Team to assist with a comprehensive review and evaluation of the agency and potential for improved service to Northern Illinois.

Team members agreed to serve on a pro bono basis and were chosen to represent a diverse array of business, labor, transportation planning and advocacy, and hospitality management interests. Over a five-month period, we examined Tollway policies and operations, assessed opportunities and challenges and offered input to refocus the agency on the customers and communities it serves.

Too often, massively significant decisions are made based on expediency, short-term goals or pressures—financial or political. Our input includes a set of principles to help guide sound future decisions of the Tollway as members and management evaluate new initiatives in operations, customer service and future investments, followed by a set of specific recommendations that flow from those principles.

The guiding principles are as follows:

- Maximize the use of existing Tollway assets to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in carrying commerce and people
- Lead the industry in innovation and best practices
- Support a transportation system that preserves and enhances the environment
- Stimulate the state's economy
- Be responsible and innovative in its approach to finance

- Create transportation solutions in collaboration with other public agencies
- Use data-driven approach to grow and manage the Tollway system
- Actively promote opportunities for disadvantaged populations

**The Team developed specific recommendations in the following five priority areas:**

- Promote the regional economy
- Foster environmental responsibility and sustainability in roadway and agency operations
- Increase collaboration with regional transportation and planning agencies
- Further transparency and accountability
- Enhance customer service for its 1.4 million daily drivers

Running throughout our report is the theme of thinking creatively, not only about current Tollway roles and responsibilities, but also about new ways in which the agency might contribute to the economic and social well being of the region and the state.

Our Team also formulated a vision for the agency, proposing that the Illinois Tollway “seek to model the values of responsibility, collaboration and stewardship of the public trust with a firm commitment to integrity and innovation in all of its planning, operations and actions, now and into the future.”

In addition to seeking input, guidance and recommendations from Team members, the Tollway captured the public’s thoughts and suggestions to help inform our work. Approximately 700 comments were received over the course of five months, and a number of them have been included in this report.

The Strategic Advisory Team’s work culminates with the delivery of this report. By bringing together leaders with expertise from all walks of life, business and industry, the Team sought to provide the strategic counsel necessary to set the course for the Tollway as it looks to the challenges of the future.

Finally, we urge the Tollway to recognize that its staff and board members are the agency’s best “ambassadors,” and should be responsible for promoting and advancing the Tollway’s current and future agendas.

Sincerely,

MEMBERS OF THE STRATEGIC ADVISORY TEAM



# guiding principles

**T**he mission of the Illinois Tollway states that it is “dedicated to providing and promoting a safe and efficient system of toll supported highways while ensuring the highest possible level of customer service.” With this mission as a guide, the Tollway has achieved great success over the past years. Now, as the most recent phase of roadway building and expansion comes to a close, the Tollway is in a unique position to consider new initiatives.

The guiding principles described below provide a framework for what the Illinois Tollway should strive to be, what role it should play and what direction it should follow as it faces the challenges of the future. In effect, they provide a lens through which the Tollway should view future investments.

## **Principle 1: The Tollway will maximize the use of its existing assets to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in carrying commerce and people.**

This means first ensuring existing assets are in a state of good repair. It also means increasing the utilization rate to maximize the throughput of goods and people. By promoting traffic management technologies, congestion pricing, transit, carpooling, and accommodations for bikes and pedestrians, the Tollway can relieve congestion, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and provide convenient choices to travelers.

The Tollway will be at the forefront of active traffic management technologies that optimize performance of the existing system, such as variable speed limits and dynamic rerouting.

The Tollway will consider how transit can be incorporated into new and existing transportation systems.

## **Principle 2: The Tollway will be a leader in innovation and best practices.**

To ensure that it is as effective as possible at achieving its mission, the Tollway will be at the forefront of new technologies, innovative practices and resourceful thinking.

Technology will help efficiently manage the transportation system and allow people to make informed decisions. Open road tolling is a clear example of this principle at work. The Tollway will use intelligent transportation systems, consumer alerts, congestion management pricing strategies, and other information-based technologies designed to maximize the use of existing assets.

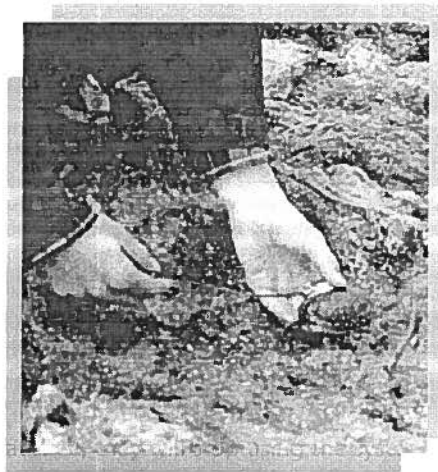
The Tollway will be a national leader in conservation measures, such as wetland mitigation, stormwater management, road salt alternatives, recycling, water conservation, and water quality improvements. It will forge transportation solutions that protect our environment and preserve our cultural heritage.

The Tollway will be a leader in its customer focus. If customers are not satisfied, they will stop using the system and it will languish and cease to serve the region's needs. The Tollway will find innovative ways to make system users aware of congestion, construction, and other Tollway activities. It will adhere to a policy of transparency and openness and invite public participation as early as possible in the planning stages of transportation projects and other decisions that impact its customers.

The Tollway will partner with Illinois-based research institutions, laboratories, industries, and design firms to develop and pilot new technologies and project delivery methods.

### **Principle 3: The Tollway will support a transportation system that preserves and enhances the environment.**

The transportation system impacts our quality of life, including the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the character of our neighborhoods. The Tollway will develop a policy to incorporate local and regional land use plans into all of its project planning. The Tollway will follow the principle that transportation choices should avoid, minimize and then mitigate harm. It will use a context sensitive solutions approach to planning, constructing and operating roads in order to preserve and enhance our aesthetic, community, and environmental resources.



### **Principle 4: The Tollway will stimulate the state's economy.**

Congestion, inconvenient travel options, and a lack of sufficient infrastructure impede economic growth. An effective transportation system that supports the unique characteristics of the state's economy will promote economic growth. The Tollway will use its authority to support the economy of Northern Illinois. This means more than just providing construction and operating jobs – it means making strategic investments that are geared towards stimulating the economy. A key component of this is increasing access to economic opportunity.

Chicago is a global city and the region has a high concentration of legal, financial, consulting, and other knowledge workers. These workers concentrate in the region's core because they need close physical proximity to one another as they integrate their services and provide the money and ideas that drive global economic systems. This dense, concentrated employment can only be sustained through transit. The Tollway will maintain alignment with transit to support continued economic development.

There is a heavy concentration of freight and freight-related industries in northern Illinois, including the Rockford, DeKalb, and metropolitan Chicago regions. In northeastern Illinois, transportation and warehousing account for 4 percent of the region's private sector employment and provide nearly \$13 billion in personal income. The success of the freight industry affects the success of many other industries – including manufacturing, agriculture, and retail and wholesale trade. Truck traffic is projected to increase by more than 70 percent over the next 30 years. The Tollway will design its projects and systems to strengthen the goods movement and logistics industries, while addressing the noise and air pollution impacts and the congestion effects caused by the industry.

Illinois has a large and growing tourism economy. In 2008, travelers spent more than \$30 billion in Illinois and the tourism industry accounted for more than 300,000 jobs. The Tollway will develop policies that make the system user-friendly to visitors and encourage travelers to journey throughout the state. It will use electronic,

information-based technology to better communicate with the system's users. It will work actively with Northern Illinois tourism organizations.

Our reliance on petroleum is a drain on the state's economy. As fuel costs rise, it will become more costly for the region's residents to afford to drive. The Tollway will encourage reduced petroleum use by providing alternative fuel and electric charging stations on the system and more connections to mass transit. The Tollway will reduce the petroleum consumption of its own fleet by moving to alternative fuel or more fuel-efficient vehicles. The Tollway will support the use of Illinois-based products for construction and operations.

Accelerated economic impact occurs when our Tollways are built and the impact of these development areas need to be assessed on an annual basis. The Tollway will begin to document the economic impact it delivers and ensure our roadways can quantify how we can and must provide a stimulus in the areas we serve.

## **Principle 5: The Tollway will be responsible and innovative in its approach to finance.**

The Tollway will maintain and be operated on a sound financial basis and maintain its obligations to its bondholders. The period during which any debt is outstanding should not be greater than the useful life of the asset financed by the debt. Toll revenue will cover the full cost of operations and servicing of debt, including pensions and benefits to Tollway employees and retirees.

The Tollway will be the first to take advantage of innovative financing opportunities that will allow maximum utilization of available dollars. The Tollway will consider acting as a private partner in developing projects with other public sector agencies. It will also consider partnering with private sector collaborators on projects if and when it makes sound financial sense and when the legal structure is tightly designed to comply with the indenture agreement.

## **Principle 6: The Tollway will create transportation solutions in collaboration with other public agencies.**

In metropolitan Chicago alone, 380 separate governments are responsible for designing and managing our transportation system. They must make decisions about a system that serves innumerable users who have very different needs – from driving to work every day to traveling on vacation to moving goods. With so many managers and users, it is vital that all parties align their needs and plans.

Each of the decisions impacts not only individual users but also the region's economic growth (where businesses will want to locate, for example), its environment, and its long-term land assets. The Tollway must be a leader in coordinating the region's transportation system. It will connect transportation planning with land use impacts that go beyond each road system, affecting our cultural, social, and environmental heritage and our future. Transportation plans will complement land use both regionally and in the vicinity of each project. The Tollway must actively participate in shaping the region's land use plan.

The Tollway will coordinate planning with local governments and maintain themes of higher densities, reduced sprawl, protecting connected open space, and maximizing the efficient use of existing assets.



## **Principle 7: The Tollway will use a data-driven approach to building and managing the transportation system.**

Using criteria and performance measures to plan and evaluate projects will help ensure that resources are being spent where they are most needed. All projects will be evaluated according to explicit and clear community, environmental, agricultural and economic development factors, as well as return on investment, congestion mitigation and safety.

In prioritizing maintenance and construction projects, the Tollway will measure the ratio of benefits to costs. The Tollway will evaluate potential hidden costs, such as flooded homes and businesses, public health, dirtier streams and lakes, diminished or contaminated water supply, loss of habitat and wildlife, and other effects on quality of life. Safety measures could include crash rate, crash severity, and the ratio of crash frequency to population density. Congestion measures could include the ratio of volume to capacity and the percentage of truck traffic on the roads.

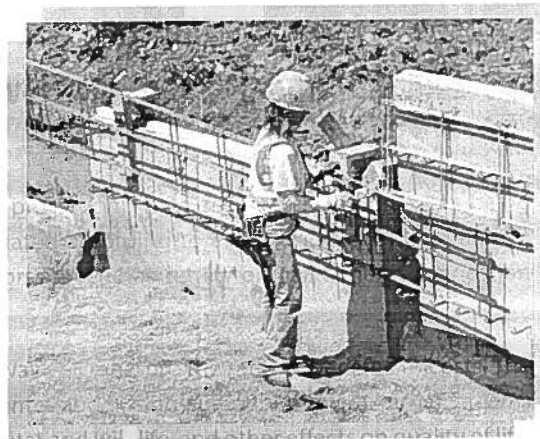
## **Principle 8: The Tollway will actively promote opportunities for disadvantaged populations, including low-income people, women, minorities, and the disabled.**

As a manager of a significant portion of our region's transportation system, the Tollway has the opportunity to improve access to employment and resources for populations that are often bypassed. The Tollway must promote investments and policies that will provide greater transportation options to low-income and otherwise disadvantaged communities, thereby enhancing their access to economic opportunities.

The Tollway has a successful Diversity Program that helps women, minorities, ex-offenders, and veterans gain employment in the construction industry. It will build on this success by expanding this program and by developing new labor programs. It will take additional action by adopting policies to provide training, employment, and contracting opportunities for disadvantaged persons in the region.

Consistent with the mission to bring economic development to the areas where our roadways exist, the Tollway must also seek to stimulate the development of local small businesses. This development brings new jobs to the communities where our assets exist. To the extent that we have a plan to provide opportunities to companies to expand their businesses by supporting the Tollway's service and supply needs, we also enrich those communities.

The Tollway will monitor the job impact of all of our local economic development activities and use this as a benchmark to expand opportunities for small business as well as disadvantaged business enterprises (DBEs), minorities and the disabled.



# recommendations

Several themes recur throughout our recommendations and cross over multiple topic areas. They include the need to think creatively about the role of the Tollway in promoting economic growth, innovative partnerships, the need to maximize use of Tollway land and the need to consider the Tollway's impact on the environment in everything it does and to follow "green practices."

## Priority Area 1: Promote the Regional Economy

*The Illinois Tollway serves as an economic engine for local communities, the broader Northern Illinois region and the state as a whole. Looking to the future, the Strategic Advisory Team encourages the agency to expand on its traditional economic development role to create new opportunities for business and innovation in a variety of ways:*

### **Make Local Preference a Priority**

- The Tollway system provides the roadway network to support the distribution of goods and services, but the Tollway, as a consumer, can also contribute to the local economy by placing a priority on goods and services produced by Illinois companies—specifically those in the 12 counties it serves. Local preference must also extend to engineering and construction contracts. By placing a priority on and preference for goods and services that are produced locally, the Tollway can support local businesses and help create and sustain jobs.

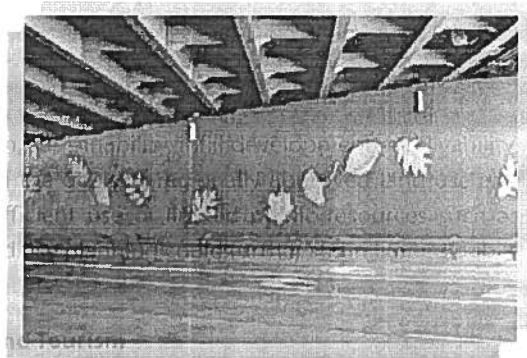
### **Maximize Land Planning Opportunities**

- The Tollway's policy of sharing the cost of appropriate new interchanges 50-50 with communities provides a fair, consistent and streamlined approach to coordinating transportation improvements. It also includes local communities in the process by encouraging them to move forward at their own pace. To that end, the agency will study the availability of land adjacent to its roadways in order to determine which interchange opportunities provide the best overall value.
- The agency will generate an "asset usage study" to explore non-road related uses for its land—including right-of-way property, interchange infields, and property adjacent to toll plazas and maintenance facilities. The goal of the study would be to identify non-transportation uses of existing Tollway property that could ultimately lead to new business or service development along system roadways. These might include alternative energy generation, commercial vehicle parking facilities or small-scale cultivation.
- As the Tollway moves forward with new programs and projects, it must consider the impact of future investments on land use. The agency can greatly influence land use and will adopt policies that promote

and support economic development, resource protection, sustainability, infill development and livability. New interchanges and roadways will be consistent with the goals of regionally approved land use and transportation plans. Applying such practices allows efficient use of limited public resources such as funding and infrastructure. Incompatible project and land use planning could further strain limited public resources.

### **Expand Local Partnerships with Communities, Businesses, and Tourism**

- The Tollway will continue to build on its solid relationships with transportation and roadway planning divisions of the communities it serves and work to ensure that local entities are included in any project planning processes from the onset. In addition, it must work to expand coordination and communication to include local attractions and businesses, as well as chambers of commerce and economic development centers.
- The Tollway must develop more formal working relationships with state tourism officials and regional convention and visitor bureaus. It can also build upon these partnerships by expanding tourism offerings at its oases, and increasing promotion of local attractions via use of structures such as bridges, noisewalls and interchange infields.
- These ideas will be incorporated into a new policy on context-sensitive solutions that describes ways in which the Tollway can work with local communities, businesses and tourism associations to develop mutually beneficial solutions. For example, one option might be to replace existing noisewall panels with new panels or adorn bridge structures with motifs that establish gateways to local communities, creating a sense of place.



### **Foster Agency-Wide Innovation**

- The Tollway will be at the forefront of technological advances and business practices, fostering innovative practices and capitalizing on its intellectual capital by recognizing employee innovation—as well as creative solutions developed in response to project and operational needs. It must also place a priority on innovations that increase public safety on its roadways.
- The Tollway does not have its own technology research department, but is actively engaged in the academic community to monitor and implement emerging technologies. It will expand existing partnerships with education institutions, research laboratories and members of the academic community to further new research and help the agency increase its sustainable efforts, reduce costs on its capital improvements and improve the efficiency and safety of its maintenance and operations.

### **Explore New Private and Public Partnerships**

- The Tollway will review new and different ways to approach private and public partnerships, not only those that support existing businesses, but also those that serve to create new business opportunities.
- The Tollway will closely collaborate with other state agencies and economic development organizations to further existing programs and foster new opportunities. As the Tollway is a major consumer of a wide variety of goods and services, the agency will create or partner with existing small business support networks that can assist potential Tollway vendors with start-up assistance, market expansion and entrepreneurial support.

- The Tollway will also identify new ways tolling and transponder technology can be applied to other travel-related businesses and services, such as using transponders in place of credit cards or cash payment of parking fees at airports or park-and-ride facilities, fuel purchases along the roadway or even as an alternate payment source for transit use.

### **Help Move Freight Efficiently**

- Northern Illinois is one of the largest inland ports in the world. The freight system connects industries and consumers to global markets. Many of the materials that are needed to make the region's businesses thrive, including raw materials and office supplies, come from somewhere outside of Illinois via the freight system. To ensure that the state retains its position as a leader in the global market, the region—including the Tollway—must continue to improve connections with the various modes of freight.
- The Strategic Advisory Team encourages the Illinois Tollway to explore opportunities to grow the regional economy by partnering with private transportation companies and rail and freight businesses to promote the development of multi-modal centers similar to the one established in Elwood, Illinois.
- Further, given the importance of freight to the region's economy, the Tollway must explore the feasibility of continuing to build new roads that can withstand the heavy weights of commercial vehicles.

### **Make It Easier To Do Business with the Tollway**

- The Strategic Advisory Team supports innovative and actionable programs that will increase economic opportunity among local, disadvantaged populations. As a manager of a significant portion of our region's transportation system, the Tollway has an opportunity to improve access to employment and resources for populations that are often bypassed.
- The Tollway's current Earned Credit Program (ECP) has succeeded in helping disadvantaged populations gain access to employment, job training and union membership in the construction industry. The Tollway must build on this success by expanding and replicating this program through increased marketing and awareness to both participants and other agencies. Focusing on workforce development best practices, lessons learned and customization of key elements of the ECP model can encourage the development of similar programs by other state and local agencies in Illinois.
- Mentor-protégé arrangements foster greater relationships between firms. Such arrangements build capacity of the protégé and allow the mentor to earn bid credits while establishing a business partnership that can live beyond an individual project. The Tollway should continue to support mentor-protégé arrangements for professional services and expand the program to include construction projects.
- Further, the Team recommends expanding Minority/Women/Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (M/W/DBE) programs to non-construction-related goods and professional services procured by the Tollway to provide another avenue for economic development.
- The Team encourages the Tollway to become a leader in diversity by increasing recruitment efforts to pools of diverse applicants for positions within the Tollway. This can be accomplished by outreach to different associations with "pipeline" programs whose participants include a diverse pool of qualified applicants. Developing partnerships with organizations with access to diverse applicant groups is also encouraged.



## Priority Area 2: Foster Environmental Responsibility and Sustainability in Roadway and Agency Operations

*The Strategic Advisory Team agrees that the Illinois Tollway must serve as a catalyst for implementing sustainable practices, promoting research and education, and positively promoting its experiences. The Governor's Executive Order 11 establishes statewide goals for environmental efficiencies. The Tollway can demonstrate its leadership by striving to exceed the goals outlined in the Executive Order. To achieve these goals, the Strategic Advisory Team recommends the following:*

### Develop an Environmental and Energy Policy

- The Tollway adheres to federal and state rules and regulations designed to protect the environment, as well as guide decision-making processes and best management practices. It will develop an agency-wide environmental and energy policy to highlight its commitment to advancing environmental issues. The policy will be a living document with revisions made as technology, innovation and environmental stewardship strengthens.
- The Strategic Advisory Team strongly recommends that the agency step forward to become a national leader in energy efficiency and conservation and be involved in the development of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)-type standards for roadways. This standard must address planning, design, construction, operation and maintenance practices. Criteria could range from conforming with land use plans, improving affected natural resources, and respecting cultural heritage, to installing innovative stormwater best management practices and using conservation-friendly materials and construction practices.
- The Tollway must rely upon state conservation plans, where possible, such as the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan and the IDNR-designated Biologically Significant Streams, to protect and enhance our natural resources.



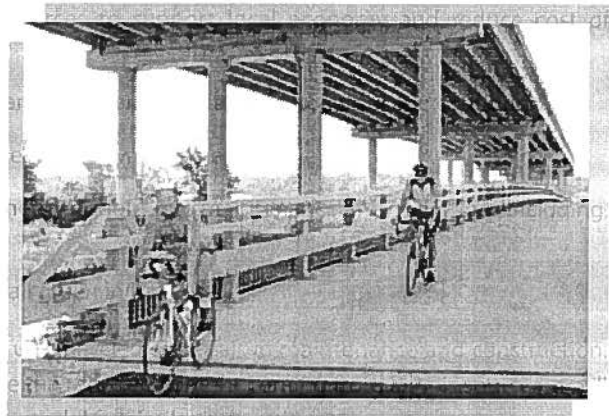
### Become a Model for Energy Efficiency and Embrace Sustainable Practices

- As a large consumer of energy, the Tollway must become more “bullish” and aggressive in its approach to energy efficiency. Energy is needed to heat, cool and power a variety of infrastructure including roadway lighting, signage and bridge lighting, electronic toll collection equipment, buildings and building amenities, and roadside communications equipment.
- To that end, the Tollway will strive for the highest Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification on all building retrofits and new construction. However, it also must balance energy investments with economic outcomes and be fiscally responsible in its decision-making.
- The Tollway recognizes that one of the best ways to save money is for the agency itself to be more energy efficient. By becoming more aggressive in its approach to energy efficiency, the Tollway will create cost savings and reduce its energy footprint. The Tollway will develop an energy management system to track, monitor and account for its many energy needs. The energy management system should also aim to measure energy used for road construction and the energy consumed by Tollway system users. The energy management system will be designed so that efficiency upgrades, building repairs and potential alternative energy applications can be evaluated in a cost effective and transparent manner.

- The Tollway must also go beyond its current energy efficient efforts and explore new opportunities such as the following:
  - Commit to use of in-state materials and resources to support local economy and reduce cost of transportation
  - Create a strategy to ensure at a minimum current goals for sustainable materials usage continue
  - Commit that new practices and materials usage will be evaluated and implemented
  - Look to integrate alternative and sustainable energy options into maintenance and operations including, solar, wind and geo-thermal energy
  - Establish a timeline for the implementation of all green initiatives
- The Tollway already has a successful program to use recycled materials in maintenance and construction. This program will be expanded and will maximize the recycled content coming from Illinois sources. It will be assessed regularly and, if successful, serve as a model for similar innovations.

#### **Create "Green" Uses of Rights-of-Way and Open Space**

- The Tollway infrastructure spans 12 counties and includes urban and rural settings. The agency will be more creative with what could be considered "underused" spaces, including rights-of-way, interchange areas, noisewalls and utility infrastructure to explore new opportunities for open space. Recognizing that the Tollway must be conscious of federal and state safety standards, it will consider new initiatives such as:
  - Alternative energy applications, power generation and storage by Tollway or through lease partners
  - Vegetation harvesting and weed management or use of native plantings to mitigate impact of carbon emissions
- The Tollway will continue its commitment to building bike trails around mitigation sites and bridging gaps in trail systems to connect people to a broader expanse of open space.



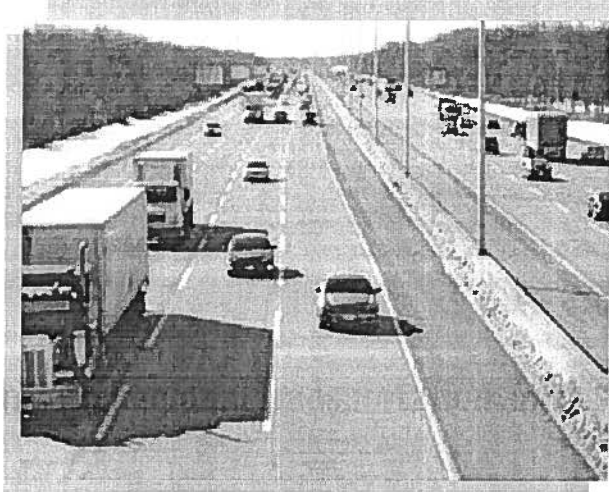
#### **Create Incentives to Support Sustainability**

- The Tollway must explore the use of incentives to influence driving behavior. There is much the Tollway can do to maintain its customer base while still encouraging commuters to consider sustainable transportation options. The Tollway will study incentives including pricing discounts for carpoolers and hybrid vehicles, as well as financial incentives for drivers who use the Tollway to get to transit locations.

## Priority Area 3: Increase Collaboration with Regional Transportation and Planning Agencies

*The Illinois Tollway is an integral and vital agency for state and regional mobility. The agency will maximize its leadership role to increase collaboration among transportation and planning agencies to collectively deliver projects that have a lasting benefit, provide congestion relief, enhance economic conditions statewide and link modes of transportation.*

### Pursue Creative Methods to Reduce Congestion - Including Congestion Pricing

- Congestion affects our transportation system in a number of ways – it increases costs for customers and impedes travel; it reduces business' access to labor and the reliability of goods shipments; it wastes fuel and causes air pollution; and it even reduces safety by making it more difficult to respond to incidents and deal with emergencies. Congestion pricing is a tool that has proven to be effective in reducing congestion in many regions across the nation and must be a priority for the Tollway. Congestion pricing also provides opportunities for economic benefits and other strategies to balance traffic levels and ultimately provide a cost-effective solution to avoid huge costs for add-a-lane toll road widening projects.
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- Congestion pricing structures will be established with the primary goal of congestion management, and must recognize the potential impact on the movement of freight.
  - The expansion of congestion pricing will include the use of high occupancy toll lanes that offer free flowing travel for buses and carpoolers.
  - As the Tollway explores other options to reduce congestion, it will work with major corporations, communities, distributors and cargo transport companies to:
    - Explore solutions to reduce commercial truck congestion
    - Identify opportunities for greater flexibility in delivery schedules
    - Consider adjustments to zoning and noise restrictions associated with the delivery and pick-up of freight shipments.
  - Widespread use of the Tollway's I-PASS throughout Northern Illinois—coupled with the interoperability with other electronic toll collection agencies throughout the Midwest and East Coast—provides an opportunity to expand the technology to effect change in regional fee collection system. The Tollway must assume a leadership role in collaborating to expand the use of toll collection technology.

### Integrate Transit

- The Illinois Tollway must continue to coordinate investment decisions within the context of other regional plans so that transit can be integrated into current and future roadway projects. The Tollway recognizes that

there is no way to build the region out of congestion, and transit is a tool to maximize throughput during peak travel times. The agency will play an integral role in future transit planning so that it can evaluate options for incorporating and integrating transit into its major capital projects.

- The inclusion of transit is consistent with national and statewide livability initiatives and provides an opportunity for the Tollway to ensure continued mobility for future generations. Growth in the Chicago suburbs is largely centered along the interstate system and commuters are not afforded many choices when traveling between suburbs. As new projects are evaluated and implemented, some form of transit must be incorporated or considered for incorporation if it is feasible. The Tollway will also consider ways in which it can better align its operations with current transit corridors.
- The Tollway will consider the inclusion of rail lines as roads are built or reconstructed. The Tollway will facilitate bus rapid transit, including the construction of parking facilities in key locations for riders. It will promote projects that connect two or more modes of transportation.
- Given that there are limited suburb-to-suburb commuting options, the Tollway will also look to strategically incorporate Park-N-Ride facilities along its system. Park-N-Ride facilities encourage carpooling and transit, which could help support the efficient use of managed lanes.

#### Enhance Regional Coordination

- The Tollway is involved in regional planning throughout its operating area and its staff is engaged with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), the Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning and the DeKalb-Sycamore Area Transportation Study. The Tollway will contribute to the continuing development of and maintain consistency with these long-term plans.
- Specifically, the Tollway's policies must coincide with CMAP's Go To 2040 plan's themes of higher densities, reduced sprawl, protecting connected open space, and maximizing existing assets.
- The Tollway will maintain consistency with plans of the Illinois Department of Transportation and the Regional Transportation Authority, and complement the goals of other State agencies, such as the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.
- Moving forward, the agency will serve as a catalyst to strengthen regional collaboration and coordination throughout its operating area. It can do this by identifying organizations along each corridor and actively engaging each to determine how capital investment can increase efficiencies and achieve mutual goals. The overarching goal of this proposed increase in collaboration and coordination will be to encourage and support a regional approach to planning.
- The Tollway's public outreach associated with project development and planning will follow a process that values extensive stakeholder input. Outreach efforts will extend to businesses, tourism, trucking, rail, freight and other groups throughout northern Illinois. The Strategic Advisory Team recognizes the importance of freight and logistics planning and recommends that the Tollway ensure good communication between the various logistic providers and major intermodal facilities. Specifically, the Tollway will also consider working



with local communities and businesses to allow commercial delivery of goods during overnight and off-peak hours.

- The Tollway will integrate public transportation and environmental planning into regional plans so that its decisions and actions help shape growth in existing urbanized areas and protect important open space. Roads and road building are, by nature, disruptive to natural habitats. Future transportation solutions should avoid, minimize and mitigate damage to natural resources. The Tollway has begun this process through research, wildlife monitoring and bioswale creation. The agency can improve this process through the following measures:
  - Avoid damaging natural areas and preserve open space by ensuring transportation decisions lead to smart growth in existing urbanized areas.
  - Minimize damage through the incorporation of transit options in any construction project.
  - Mitigate natural resource damage with increased use of bioswales for storm water management and re-vegetation of disturbed land with native species.
  - Prioritize projects that link two or more modes of transportation. Multi-use corridors (transit and trail) provide alternatives to driving and promoting recreation, exercise, and a stronger connection to livable, walkable communities. The Tollway should continue its commitment to building trails and bridging gaps in trail systems in line with the 2009 Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways and Trails Plan.
- The tremendous success of the Earth Day Transportation Summit illustrated that Tollway executive leadership and staff should continue as the Summit members recommended and meet regularly with other local transportation and planning agencies including PACE, Metra, the Illinois Department of Transportation, the Regional Transit Authority, the Chicago Transit Authority and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. By working together and having regular, established reporting each Earth Day, these leaders will foster continued collaboration, maximize efficiencies, reduce costs, and pursue collective goals including economic growth, environmental quality and a coordinated and integrated transportation system.



### **Coordinate Zoning with Local Communities**

The Tollway must leverage its work with communities to begin dialogue with the ultimate goal of affecting local zoning regulations that stand in the way of improvements to truck travel and delivery schedules. In order for Tollway incentives to the commercial trucking industry to have any impact on reduction of congestion during peak commuter hours, there must also be corresponding support from local communities and businesses dictating drop off and pickup times for goods. The Tollway will look to establish a pilot program with one community that ideally can be developed and used into a template for other communities.

## Priority Area 4: Further Transparency and Accountability

*Transparency and accountability demonstrates the agency's responsibility, credibility and stewardship of the public trust. The Team provides the following recommendations in this area:*

### **Aggressively Share Purchasing and Contract Information on the Web Site**

- The Tollway's Web site is a far-reaching communication tool with the potential for great impact. While the Tollway has made substantive improvements to its site map and content over the last several years, the Team recommends continued efforts to enhance online transparency. Suggestions include adding a feature that lists respondents to all requests for proposals issued by the Tollway for both construction and goods and services contracts. The Tollway should also post all winning construction contracts online within a certain time period and add a list of subcontractors to the new Construction Tracker feature to ensure that the Web site is reflective of all current awards.
- The Tollway's Web site should provide easier navigation functionality for upcoming bid opportunities by identifying and highlighting which bid opportunities are active and forthcoming. Another option to enhance transparency would be to host live webcasts of bid meetings so that the public can watch and listen to the Tollway's Committee as it opens bid packages.
- Once bids are awarded and work begins, the Tollway should post contractor and subcontractor performance information online, including which projects are on-time and on-budget, as well as which are meeting project goals. Posting performance reports will further demonstrate to the public that the agency is working to make the best use of toll revenue.
- The Tollway should also consider adding new information to its Web site, including a link to the State Auditor General's Material Findings report on the Tollway, information about the Tollway's hiring practices and links to other Tollway reports.



### **Identify Industry Best Practices and Benchmark Progress**

- The Tollway is one of many agencies dedicated to building and maintaining roadways and bridges and should consider looking to its counterparts in the industry, both here in the United States and abroad. Identifying best practices in areas including engineering, public safety, maintenance, electronic tolling and fiscal responsibility, for example, would be beneficial both in terms of identifying new and creative ideas, as well as benchmarking where the Illinois Tollway falls within certain areas of operation. In this way, the Tollway can learn and benefit from its global industry counterparts, identify strengths and weaknesses and measure progress moving forward.

### **Enhance Compliance Monitoring and Measure Program Success**

- The Strategic Advisory Team agrees that "what is measured gets done." As a result, the Tollway will focus on establishing metrics and monitoring outcomes to ensure it is complying with contractual obligations and achieving stated program goals. Supplier utilization is an area that would benefit from further evaluation and monitoring. Analysis of gathered data provides an opportunity to quantify success and identify areas for improvement. Metrics should include new job development, diversity programs, management, joint ventures, project completion rates, budget management rates and other measures of economic success.

- The Tollway will also work to shorten the time that it takes to obtain audited financial statements after the end of our fiscal year.

## Priority Area 5: Enhance Customer Service

*One aspect of the Illinois Tollway's mission is to ensure the highest possible level of service to customers. The Strategic Advisory Team has developed a number of recommendations that will assist the Tollway in this area:*

### Exceed Customer Expectations

- The Tollway must first determine what its customers need and want and then identify ways to take customer service beyond those expectations. The first recommended step is to fund a comprehensive focus group analysis of the various customer constituencies.
- In addition, the Strategic Advisory Team suggests that the agency make regular use of its existing resources—such as eNewsletters, Web site and social media opportunities—to regularly survey customers and measure their satisfaction with various services such as oases, customer service centers and toll plazas.

### Learn From Other Industries

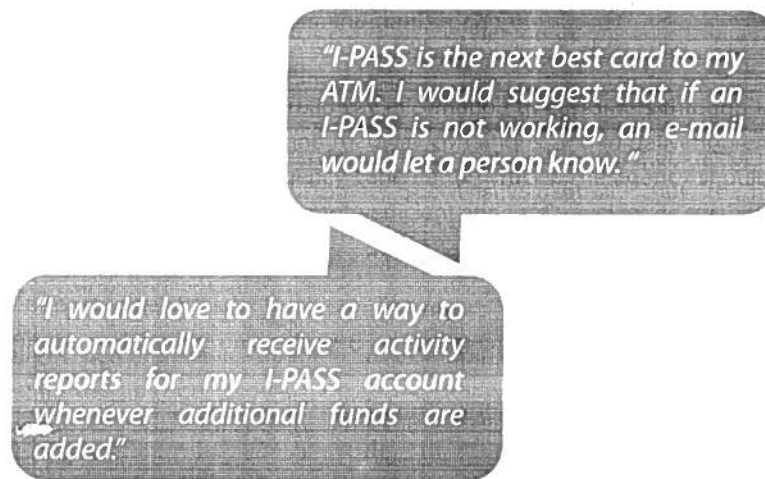
- The Tollway should move beyond its traditional transportation “comfort zone” and look to other industries to identify new and innovative ways to serve its customers. Specifically, it should follow the hospitality industry’s lead and put customer service training for employees at the forefront, developing a comprehensive customer service training program for front line employees.
- The agency also should look to other service industry providers that operate customer call centers as a way to improve its own direct customer service operations. For example, one option might be to explore the customer call back service used by Southwest Airlines’ call center. Reducing hold times for customers by upgrading services, offering a call back function or other mechanism would greatly improve customer service.
- Add weekend service hours at the oases, as requested by some customers interviewed by the Tollway.

*“Make hours for the I-PASS centers at oases more accessible for working people who can’t go there between 9-5 on weekdays... maybe even just 9-12 on Saturdays.”*

### Improve Access to Roadway Information and Services

- The Illinois Tollway has been a leader in providing roadway information to customers through the use of electronic message boards to convey travel times and roadway conditions, and in delivering emergency services on the roadway via HELP (Highway Emergency Lane Patrol) Trucks. The agency should look for ways to expand and improve on these services to promote efficient and safe travel for its customers, while also exploring new funding options.
- The Tollway should study opportunities for sponsorship of Tollway assets, including sponsorship of HELP Trucks, local blue board signage, and signage on overpasses and bridges to help guide drivers to destination points along the system.

- The Tollway should identify opportunities to maximize the use of technology for roadway communication with customers, such as development of a mobile phone application that provides access to I-PASS account information and Tollway construction information. Customers agree:



- The Tollway should explore opportunities to partner with billboard companies—especially those with electronic displays—to negotiate shared use of real-time messaging to include travel times and other roadway information.

#### **Enhance Service to Truckers**

- The Tollway should investigate opportunities to expand services that cater to commercial truckers, such as recommendations from the trucking industry to identify options for both short-term and off-Tollway parking that could provide truckers with convenient locations to stage until scheduled pick-up and delivery times. Providing opportunities for parking for rest or layover ensures truck drivers are well rested and attentive when driving on the Tollway, promoting safer travel for everyone. This is especially important in light of new federal regulations limiting the amount of continuous hours a driver is behind the wheel. The Tollway also should consider conducting a study of truck-only lanes as a way to reduce congestion and enhance safety for all drivers.
- There is limited parking capacity along the Tollway system for commercial vehicles. If congestion pricing or other time-of-day pricing policies are adopted, the Team recommends that the Illinois Tollway consider providing additional commercial vehicle parking. The Tollway should evaluate existing right-of-way properties or seek to partner with local communities and private developers to expand commercial parking. It should also take an active role in working with communities to seek opportunities to reduce the impact on delivery schedules associated with zoning restrictions that limit delivery times that overlap with peak-period travel times.

## Expand Transponder Interoperability

- I-PASS customers love the convenience of transponder interoperability. Requests to encourage additional toll roads to the West and to the South to join the E-ZPass group are frequent and should be considered. Others requested that the Tollway look for additional uses of I-PASS.

*"I would like to see I-PASS further extended to other states like Florida Sun Pass, nationwide, or even into Canada..."*

*"We really would like to be able to use our transponder when we travel through the tollways in Missouri and Oklahoma. When will Illinois begin working with these states to allow use of our Illinois transponder on their tollways?"*

*"We need I-PASS for parking..."*

- The Tollway should remain current on opportunities for dialogue with other toll agencies nationwide. It should also look beyond traditional tolling applications to identify new transportation-related uses and even cross promotion with other regional transportation infrastructure to create a seamless network across a wide array of resources such as transit and parking garages. There is potential for the creation of a universal "transportation account" which would enable customers to manage I-PASS, transit, parking and potentially more via interoperability of account management services. This concept has been discussed for some time, but the Tollway has an opportunity to play a leadership role among agencies to make this a reality.
- While transponder interoperability has the potential to provide a variety of benefits to both the private and public sectors in the form of customer convenience, it could also save commercial drivers and companies money spent on purchasing multiple system transponders to equip their trucks. The Strategic Advisory Team advocates further efforts to identify use of transponders to create a virtual travel "corridor" in the region for a variety of applications, possibly including toll payments, electronic weigh station applications, permitting/credential information, parking facility access, transit tracking and intermodal cargo logistics applications.

# conclusion

The Tollway Strategic Advisory Team recognizes the importance of the Illinois Tollway System as an economic engine for the communities it serves, the northern Illinois region and the state as a whole. As a transportation system, its four roadways serve as the hub of the regional roadway network moving workers as well as goods and services to their daily destinations. In addition, connections to the system provide communities with gateways for tourism, business and residential developments.



The Team believes that the recommendations and guiding principles outlined in this report can set the course for the Illinois Tollway as it considers new initiatives and opportunities to improve performance and operations now and assist the agency as it looks to the challenges of the future. Transparency and accountability, economic development, environmental responsibility, regional transportation planning and customer service must all be considered in the decisions made by the Tollway Board and executive leadership.

By taking into consideration the ideas, concepts and recommendations included in this document, the Tollway has the basis from which to build a strategic plan that leverages its resources to not only efficiently move people, goods and services, but also to help bolster development and overall economic viability of our region and our state.

Finally, we suggest that the Strategic Advisory Team reconvene in 12 months to learn about progress made and steps taken to implement these recommendations.

See you in 12 months.

# appendix

The following outlines how the Strategic Advisory Team came to be, how it was organized, what its process was and the context from which it developed the recommendations featured in this report.

## Organization

In April 2010, the Illinois Tollway Board of Directors approved the selection of Kristi Lafleur as Executive Director to meet the charge to the agency from Governor Pat Quinn “to work with state and regional transportation partners to renew the agency’s economic development program for Northern Illinois; foster environmentally smart planning and construction, within an efficient, diverse and transparent government; and enhance customer service.”

Bringing together leaders to create this advisory team was Lafleur’s first step in meeting the Governor’s directive. Team members were chosen to represent a diverse array of business, labor, transportation planning and advocacy, and hospitality management interests.

Chaired by Museum of Science and Industry President and CEO David Mosena, the Team also formulated two Subcommittees: an Editing Subcommittee to draft and edit the report and a Planning Subcommittee to develop a set of principles to guide the evaluation of new opportunities moving forward.

## Process

In all, the Team met six times. In addition to the Executive Director and senior staff from the Tollway who attended all meetings, some Board members attended and participated in selected meetings. After the introductory meeting, subsequent meetings were organized into content areas, with one monthly meeting for each topic. Meeting agendas were developed to include presentations by Tollway senior staff, participation from outside speakers, and breakout sessions to facilitate more in-depth dialogue and brainstorming. Other topics covered in the meetings included an exploration of diversity issues and an overview of Illinois tourism goals and activities.

Prior to the Team meetings, members were sent comprehensive pre-briefing materials which included relevant articles, background information and other data to advance discussion and further understanding of the Tollway and its challenges and opportunities.