

Representative Riley's "Roadmap for the Region"

My "Roadmap for the Region" is more than an alliterative slogan. I have often talked of the creation of a regional comprehensive plan for development; whose framework has been developed. However, much of the physical and economic development of the region will still emanate from or be aided by these four major transportation projects. Creating optimal ingress and egress to the region dictates optimizing "ports of entry" or access points, such as the 57/294 interchange, the South East Service Line, the Red Line expansion, and the public private partnership that is the Abraham Lincoln National Airport. These major projects along with other local projects like road improvements, transit oriented development, retail and residential development all speak to a wide ranging plan of redevelopment and reinvigoration of the south suburban region. Indeed, it can be a plan as diverse as our region itself.

1. 57/294 interchange: There is only one other set of interstate highways in the country that cross each other, but have no interchange. This interchange was on the books for years but never was developed. We are simply implementing something that we should have gotten years ago. It will relieve congestion on both I-57 and Interstate 80 while also facilitating a smoother and safer transition between 57 and 294. The Tollway Authority has wrapped up Phase I planning activities and currently accepting public comments on their findings until September 26, 2008, right around the corner. IDOT is to begin their activities for Phase I. Through the leadership of Representative Robert Rita and the diligence of Representative Riley and others in the Southland Caucus, IDOT has been allocated \$16 million for phase I and II activities of the 57/294 interchange.
2. The 3rd Chicago airport: Last September, IDOT provided me with a facility tour, site tour and an aerial tour of the South Suburban Airport footprint. At 1200 feet, one's perspective is much different about the potential for regional development than on the ground. In my mind's eye, I was able to foresee the hopes, dreams and long held aspirations that many of us have strived for throughout the years for this region. There are developers waiting anxiously to invest \$300 million into building the airport; a public private endeavor which would bring much needed jobs to our region. We are literally a few signatures away from fulfilling the transportation vision for the region, first discussed nearly 40 years ago.
3. The SouthEast Service Line: Part of the concessions won in Representative Riley's and the Southland Caucus' efforts in securing an equitable mass transit bill for the south suburbs was the promise of 200 million dollars to jump start SouthEast Service Line planning and development. In addition, planning board representation can often mean more than the promise of monetary resources. Having the former can often insure the latter. Another concession that was made in the Transit Bill was a permanent seat on the Metra board from the South Suburbs. It is through this representation that hope can spring eternal that the SES line will come to fruition in the near future.

Representative Riley's "Roadmap for the Region"

4. Red Line expansion: The South Suburbs represents the only region in Cook County that the CTA does not provide rail service. This is despite the fact that we pay our taxes and use CTA rail as we travel around the metropolitan area. Given the political will and the voice of the people, there is no reason that the Red Line cannot be extended south of 95th street into the near suburban fringe. This will better allow south suburbanites to gain access to a transit system that they pay their hard earned tax dollars into.