Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

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Jane Addams (I-90) eastbound exit to Lee Street Benefits Report

In accordance with the RTP Amendment Process in the RTP Administrative Policies and Procedures Appendix, the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority (Illinois Tollway) has requested an amendment to the 2026 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) to an add interchange improvement at I-90 and Lee Street as a fiscally constrained Regional Capital Project (RCP).

Adding a new capacity-impacting RCP requires a major amendment to the RTP, including a 30-day public comment period and approval by CMAP's MPO Policy Committee.

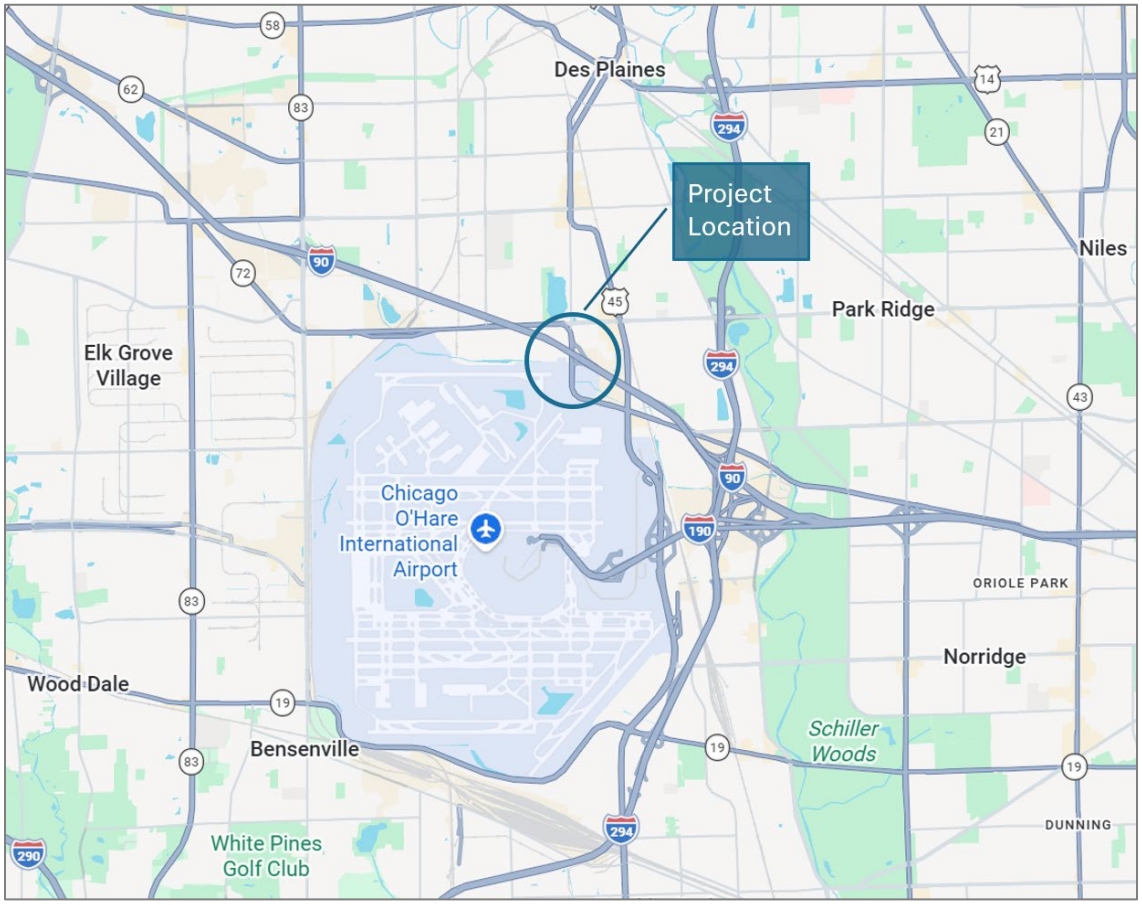
This proposed $35.7 million project would improve connections between I-90 and residential, commercial, and industrial areas northeast of O'Hare International Airport. Project implementation is planned for 2031. The improvements are expected to support the RTP goals of strengthening connections between people and places and supporting economic prosperity and inclusive growth. These new capacity costs will be fully covered by new Tollway revenues resulting from recently adopted toll rate increases. As a result, the RTP will continue to be fiscally constrained with the inclusion of this project.

This report summarizes the proposed improvement, alignment with RTP goals, and anticipated impact on the Financial Plan for Transportation.

Project description

The existing I-90 interchange at Lee Street provides access only to and from the east, with an entrance ramp to eastbound I-90 and an exit ramp from westbound I-90. Currently, the nearest alternative connections between Lee Street and I-90 are Elmhurst Road, approximately 2.5 miles northwest of Lee Street, and the I-190 exit toward O'Hare International Airport, approximately 1.5 miles southeast.

Figure 1. Project Location



Map source: Google Maps

The proposed project would add an eastbound exit ramp from I-90 to Lee Street, providing more direct access to nearby residential, commercial, and industrial areas.

The project would also improve the connecting local road network through new turn lanes, pedestrian crosswalks, and traffic signal modernizations at the Lee Street intersection with Touhy Avenue and the Higgins Road (IL 72) intersection with Patton Drive.

Together, these improvements are intended to improve access between I-90 and surrounding communities, support more efficient traffic flow, and enhance connections to major economic and freight centers near O'Hare Airport.

Alignment with RTP goals

The proposed improvements aim to strengthen transportation connections, reduce indirect travel, and improve traffic flow between I-90 and surrounding residential, commercial, and industrial areas in Rosemont and Des Plaines.

Currently, limited access between eastbound I-90 and the Lee Street corridor contributes to indirect travel routes and additional traffic on local roads. The proposed exit ramp would provide a more direct connection to nearby destinations, including major employment and freight centers.

In addition, the ramp, as proposed, would provide a direct connection from the interstate system to the Northeast air cargo ramp, providing a more efficient connection for the substantial volume of freight traffic flowing to and from the airport. O'Hare airport ranks first in airfreight value of all airports in North America, and second in tonnage behind Miami International Airport for large passenger airports. Construction of the eastbound exit ramp from I-90 is assumed in the Final O'Hare Terminal Area Plan with Finding of No Significant Impact.[1]

The project supports two RTP goals:

- Strengthen connections between people and places.
- Support economic prosperity and inclusive growth.

The improvements are expected to provide more efficient and reliable access to businesses, industrial areas, and neighborhoods northeast of O'Hare Airport while reducing some traffic on local roads.

CMAP evaluated the proposed improvements using the same metrics applied to RCPs during development of the RTP, to the extent possible. The full list of RCP metrics with data sources and approach can be viewed in the RCP Benefits Report.

Table 1 presents the findings for this project under the cost and impact evaluation metrics. Because the project is new infrastructure, the need-based metrics, which focus on existing conditions of assets that will be improved, do not apply.

In summary, the project is expected to provide a moderate reduction in regional travel delays for trips to and from economically disconnected areas (EDAs), provide support for infill development, and have minimal impacts on regional emissions. Its estimated capital cost of $35.7 million represents approximately 0.2 percent of the total capacity costs of evaluated RCPs.

[1] Federal Aviation Administration. Chicago O'Hare Internation Airport Final Environmental Assessment. Appendix K – Surface Transportation and Parking. November 2022. Final Chicago O'Hare International Airport Terminal Area Plan and Air Traffic Procedures Environmental Assessment and Final General Conformity Determination with the Finding of No Significant Impact and Record of Decision | Federal Aviation Administration

Table 1: I-90 at Lee Street evaluation metrics

Performance category	Evaluation findings
Roadway network mobility	Moderate impact on travel delays for trips to and from economically disconnected areas (EDAs), with a 0.2 percent reduction, or approximately 500 hours on an average weekday. Passenger vehicle travel delays would decrease by 0.1 percent, or approximately 200 hours on an average weekday. The project ranks in the top third of evaluated RCPs for reductions in EDA trip delays and in the top half for passenger vehicle delays. Minimal impact. Truck travel delays would decrease by less than 0.1 percent.
Transit network mobility	Not applicable.
Emissions impact	Minimal impact, less than 0.01 percent impact.
Infill development support	Above-average support. Approximately 71 percent of trips would begin or end in an area supportive of infill development, compared with an average of 69 percent for evaluated RCPs.
Capital cost (year of expenditure $)	$35.7 million, approximately 0.2 percent of total evaluated RCP capacity costs.
% cost for new capacity	100%
Annual maintenance and operation cost (2026 $)	Estimated increase of $3,000 annually.

Conformity determination

Because the project adds new interchange movements, it is not exempt from inclusion in the region's air quality conformity determination.

Conformity determinations assess whether proposed transportation plans and Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) are consistent with applicable air quality requirements. The analysis must demonstrate that planned transportation investments will not cause new violations of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards, worsen existing violations, or delay attainment of those standards.

The regional air quality conformity analysis of 2026 RTP Major Amendment 1 indicates that including the proposed interchange improvement would not cause the region to exceed its allowable emissions budget for ozone precursors. Additional information is provided in the accompanying TIP Plan Revision in the Conformity Determination Plan Revision memo.

Fiscal constraint impact

Illinois Tollway capital projects are funded through tolls and other agency revenues, which in turn are revenues that can only be used for eligible purposes. As a result, the fiscal constraint analysis includes revenues and costs anticipated by Illinois Tollway based on the information available during the development of the RTP.

Since the adoption of the RTP, amendments are needed to recognize that the Illinois Tollway Board of Directors approved updated toll rates — including increases in passenger and commercial vehicle tolls and future inflation-based adjustments along with a new capital program, *Driving Connections*. Respective toll increases are expected to go into effect in early 2027.

The Illinois Tollway estimates that construction of the proposed I-90 at Lee Street interchange improvements will cost $35.7 million in year-of-expenditure dollars. As part of the *Driving Connections* capital program, these costs and future ongoing maintenance needs associated with the addition of new infrastructure will be fully covered by the incremental Tollway revenues.

The accompanying local roadway modernization improvements account for a relatively small share of the total cost and fall within the maintenance and improvement cost estimates already incorporated into the Financial Plan.

As a result, the RTP will continue to be fiscally constrained with the inclusion of this project.