

## Northfield to governor: Drop Willow plans, save money

(<http://www.pioneerlocal.com/winnetka/news/2233244,winnetka-willow-050410-s1.article>)

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Northfield Village President Fred Gougler touts a plan that he says would save the state millions, and he penned a letter to the governor Monday making his case.

Gougler's solution: scrap a plan to widen Willow Road.

Northfield officials have long argued against widening Willow Road beyond three lanes (the stretch in Northfield is currently two lanes), and the state's budget woes provided them with another argument.

The letter refers to a budgeted \$31 million that would be used in part to widen Willow Road. Although state officials have said that amount is merely a place-holder and does not reflect a concrete plan, some in Northfield have said the Illinois Department of Transportation estimate amounts to a done deal.

The estimated cost to widen the 1.2-mile stretch of road in Northfield was included in a list of anticipated IDOT projects released last month.

Gougler's letter calls the cost "extravagant" and refers to the stretch of road as the "\$31 million-mile."

In the letter, Gougler also refers to a previously agreed-upon plan to structure Willow Road with three lanes. Although the state scrapped that plan years ago, many in Northfield argue it would alleviate traffic while promoting pedestrian safety. The estimated cost for that project is between \$6 million and \$8 million, according to the letter.

The letter to the governor is part of the village's ongoing efforts to promote the three-lane configuration, but Gougler said the cost argument is sincere.

"We think we can save the tax-payers quite a bit of money by building the three-lane plan now, particularly when the state is obviously in such a state of fiscal disarray," Gougler said on Monday. "We need to allocate resources where they can best be used. To me, having \$31 million for a road that isn't going to be built for five years, when we could do something right now, doesn't make a lot of sense."

Gougler said he is confident that the Gov. Pat Quinn would consider Northfield's argument.

Because the letter was sent Monday, Quinn's office was unable to respond by press time Tuesday.