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State starts over on Willow Road

At the end of 2008, Willow Road in Northfield appeared to be headed for a four-lane configuration. At the end of this year, it's back to square one.

The Illinois Department of Transportation announced in June that it would start over on Willow Road, scrapping previous studies.

Under consideration is whether the state should widen the 1.2-mile stretch of Willow Road in Northfield — from Sunset Ridge Road to Northfield Road. Currently, it is two lanes.

Either side of that stretch is four lanes.

Northfield has argued Willow Road should be no wider than three lanes, but its neighbors to the west have called for nothing short of four lanes to alleviate traffic.

A study completed more than a year ago — by the Willow Road Enhancement Steering Committee — did not conclude whether the road should be widened, although members acknowledged a strong local sentiment for three lanes.

Before then, IDOT had committed to a project to widen the road to three lanes, based on a study completed in 1999. The widening would have begun in 2005 if that study, too, had not been scratched.

And up until the most recently announced study, IDOT was preparing to widen the road to four lanes.

A "Community Advisory Group" will meet during the next two years to create a new plan. The 25-member committee has 13 Northfield representatives. Other members represent Glenview, Northbrook and Winnetka.

The latest study is expected to take about two years.

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