

STIMULUS SPENDING

State construction plan includes widening Willow

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The state capital plan awaiting Gov. Patrick Quinn's signature includes \$25 million to convert Willow Road through Northfield into a 4-lane highway, a project planned and argued about for four decades.

Planning began on a controversial Willow project last summer that will include a pedestrian underpass beneath the highway. State Sen. Jeff Schoenberg, D-9th, in announcing the funding Tuesday, said that he knows that safety provision won't necessarily convince widening-hating Northfield leaders to stop fighting the project.

"The state has made a sizable investment (in a project) including an underpass,

where children and adults can cross Willow Road between Willow and Clarkson parks," he said.

"I'm hopeful that the village will work in a cooperative spirit with the state department of transportation to bring about the safest and most efficient and least disruptive solution."

New Northfield Village President Fred Gougler said Tuesday he'd wait until he knew more before saying just how cooperative he would be.

His retired predecessor, John Birkinbine, noted Tuesday that since four-lane planning is only underway a year, ground breaking remains a year or more in the future, while a three-lane project Northfield leaders prefer is already mapped out.

"If they wanted a shovel-ready project to put people to work, all they have to do is have the head of IDOT sign off on the project," he groused.

Schoenberg — and leaders of Northbrook and Glenview — maintain a four-lane highway will be safer for both pedestrians and drivers, and promises that he'll help get state funding for storm sewer improvements under the new road, if Northfield leaders want it. They'll also be asked for input on "Lexus and Ford" versions of the underpass and other parts of the 1.2-mile project.

The Willow project is the most costly of almost \$90 million in projects Schoenberg said are on the way, some of which may start as early as fall.

They include \$18 million for Northwestern University, \$7 million in a grant to complete the Molecular Therapeutics and Diagnostics building.

Money for road projects — many languishing for lack of funding for years — include:

- \$6 million: Improvement of Old Orchard Road's intersection with Skokie Boulevard in Skokie

- \$4.78 million: Land acquisition, bridge rehabilitation, retaining walls and resurfacing on Winnetka Road from Interstate 94 to Hibbard Road

- \$4.025 million: Improvement of Dempster Street in Skokie

- \$3.7 million: Resurfacing Waukegan Road from Willow Road to Golf Road in Glenview

- \$3.2 million: Adding lanes and traffic signal improvements on Golf Road, from the north branch of the Chicago River to Central Avenue in Skokie

- \$3 million for intersection improvements, lighting and traffic signals on Golf Road at Niles Center Road in Skokie

- \$2.575 million: Resurfacing and drainage on Sheridan Road from Lake-Cook Road to Winnetka Avenue in Winnetka and Glenview

- \$2.53 million for resurfacing Green Bay Road from Scott Avenue to 16th Street in Winnetka

- \$2.2 million: Engineering and construction of Bridge Street over the North Shore Sanitary Canal in Evanston

- \$2.03 million: Resurfacing Church Street from

Gross Point Road to Dodge Avenue in Skokie and Evanston

- \$1.90 million: Land acquisition, traffic signals, resurfacing and channelization of Hibbard Road at Illinois Road in Wilmette

- \$1.28 million: Resurfacing Edens Expressway frontage roads in Evanston and Wilmette

- \$1 million: Resurfacing Milwaukee Avenue at Glenview Road in Glenview

- \$1 million: Resurfacing Crawford Avenue from Glenview Road to Old Glenview Road in Wilmette

- \$650,000: Resurfacing Greenwood Avenue from West Lake Avenue to Springdale Avenue in Glenview

- \$400,000: Resurfacing Asbury Avenue from Oakton Street to Howard Street in Evanston