

## Willow Road study group gets Northbrook reps

(<http://www.pioneerlocal.com/northbrook/news/1810361,northbrook-road-100809-s1.article>)

October 6, 2009

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Northbrook will have representation on a tentative study to widen state-owned Willow Road from two lanes to four in neighboring Northfield.

Northbrook Trustee Todd Heller and Tensley Garris, president of Northbrook Chamber of Commerce & Industry were named to the Willow Road Community Group, as well as two local business people and resident David Petrich.

For years, Northfield residents have argued the project was unsafe because three Northfield schools, as well as other churches and parks lie on the 1.2-mile Willow stretch from Waukegan Road east through to Provident Avenue in Winnetka.

Willow Road Community Group will attempt to break a 40-year impasse on widening or somehow improving traffic flow on often congested Willow Road, Heller said.

He said a four-lane road would loosen traffic, but listening to Northfield's concerns will be maintained.

"Other municipalities and businesses want to see traffic alleviated, but Northfield has compelling concerns," Heller said. "To me, four lanes would go to solving the problem. Yet, maybe Northfield has other concerns, so let's talk about it. Let's air all options."

Bob Hayward, Northfield resident and chairman of the village's Traffic & Transportation Committee, said a 2005 state plan to expand Willow Road to three lanes in some areas was unfortunately cancelled.

Hayward said several surrounding villages and the Illinois Department of Transportation supported the "workable, safe Willow Road design" in 2005, but pointed out State Sen. Jeffrey Schoenberg, D-9th, and former Gov. Rod Blagojevich ditched the project.

Specifically, Hayward said special interest groups were pushing Schoenberg to re-open the notion of widening of Willow Road to four lanes.

"The big box stores that were built in Glenview and Northbrook are not doing well. So will Sen. Schoenberg keep restarting these studies to get the results that big retailers want?" Hayward said. "If I were Jeff Schoenberg, I'd look in the mirror and ask, 'Why did I support this program in 2005, but have since changed my mind?' As a taxpayer who wants more transparency and less pay-to-play politics, this really looks suspicious," Hayward said.

In a release, Schoenberg said the state-funded study will cost \$90,000, partly spent on a proposed underpass between Willow Park and Clarkson Park.

"Willow Road is regionally a major road and clearly cannot handle the existing traffic, which has reduced its safety, as well. Northfield has repeatedly refused to consider any reasonable alternative, despite the support of many North Shore villages," Schoenberg said in an interview.

Schoenberg also said the Illinois General Assembly has approved \$25 million to expand Willow Road to four lanes, but construction would not extend to the state-owned right-of-way on the road's shoulders.