

Dold outlines views on transportation

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U.S. Rep. Robert Dold feels that Illinois may be getting less money from the federal government for transportation projects going forward.

Dold addressed the expansion of Route 53, a new federal transportation bill, as well as the federal budget deficit during the annual meeting of the Transportation Management Association of Lake Cook on Friday in Deerfield.

Speaking to 40 people at the Baxter Healthcare auditorium, Dold, R-10th, of Kenilworth, focused much of his discussion on the reauthorization of the federal SAFETEA-LU act, which establishes federal funding for major road, transit and other transportation programs nationwide. The act is set to expire in September and provides \$1.9 billion annually in federal transportation funding for Illinois.

Dold said transportation issues have traditionally enjoyed bipartisan support in Congress, and he expects the transportation bill will be reauthorized. But given the current budget outlook in Washington, "I think it's going to be less than what's recommended," he said.

Dold also expects some reforms will be proposed by the House to reduce bureaucratic red tape and streamline the approval process for transportation projects so needed highway improvements can move forward more quickly.

"Typically, highway projects can take up to 15 years and I know that's the case with some of the bigger highway projects in the region," he said.

One of those larger highway projects that Dold supports is the northern expansion of Route 53 into Lake County, hooking up to a proposed Route 120 bypass near Grayslake. He said the Route 53 project is important to safety, traffic flow and commerce in the region.

Dold also voiced support for the O'Hare Airport expansion plan and the creation of the suburban STAR line, a proposed Metra commuter rail line which would connect nearly 100 suburban communities through transit. He said federal funding has been earmarked for the STAR line, but the state has yet to provide matching funds for the project.

"The reason why it's not moving forward is the state match is not there," he said. "It's something that because the state doesn't have the resources it's not moving forward at this time."

Dold also discussed the federal budget deficit and the federal debt-ceiling limit. He said the federal budget deficit stands at \$1.5 trillion and many members in Congress from both political parties are reluctant to raise debt-ceiling until serious efforts are made to reduce federal spending.

"We can't continue to spend the way we're spending," he said. "There is little or no appetite to raise the debt-ceiling without spending limits associated with that."