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**FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WITHDRAWS PRAIRIE PARKWAY APPROVAL,  
ENDING FEDERAL FUNDING FOR THE HIGHWAY PROJECT**

The federal government has rescinded its approval of the proposed Prairie Parkway which would connect I-80 and I-88 in Kane, Kendall, and Grundy counties under an agreement to settle a lawsuit filed by opponents of the highway project.

The action eliminates federal funding for the project, and the Illinois Department of Transportation will now shift federal funds previously allocated to the Prairie Parkway to improvements to Illinois 47 and US 34.

“After an 11-year fight, we have finally scuttled this highway which would have destroyed thousands of acres of prime farmland, threatened the Fox River and its tributaries, and forever changed the area’s small community way of life,” said Jan Strasma, Chairman, Citizens Against the Sprawlway (CATS), the grassroots organization long opposing the highway.

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Note: The Prairie Parkway opponents will celebrate the end of the project at the 11th Annual ‘Stop the Beltway’ Picnic which begins at 4 pm Sunday at the Marvel Davis farm, 47W066 Jericho Rd, near Big Rock, about 5 miles west of Illinois 47.  
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“We commend Governor Quinn's senior team for focusing on resolving this longstanding problem and working with us and the Federal Highway Administration on a smart solution,” said Howard A. Learner, Executive Director of the Environmental Law & Policy Center, which provided legal representation and guidance.

“This is a better and affordable transportation solution that will improve local roadways, create needed jobs, preserve community values and protect sensitive environmental areas,” Learner said.

Gary Swick, President of Friends of the Fox River, which with CATS challenged the project in federal court, added, “We are pleased that the project will no longer pose a threat to the water quality of the Fox River, and appreciative to all the partners who have worked for this decision.”

"For all of us who work to protect the natural resources of the Fox River and prime farmland of Kane and Kendall counties, we're delighted with this conclusion," noted Jerry Adelman, President & CEO of Openlands. "Our thanks to all the partners who made this decision possible and to ELPC's expert legal work"

The 37-mile-long Prairie Parkway was proposed in 2001 and received a big boost in 2005 when then-House Speaker Dennis Hastert earmarked \$207 million in federal tax dollars for the project.

About \$70 million in federal and state funds has been spent thus far on the Prairie Parkway for need and environmental studies, engineering, and purchase of about 250 acres of land along the proposed route. No actual construction has taken place.

In September 2008 the Federal Highway Administration issued its Record of Decision approving the Prairie Parkway project and its Final Environmental Impact Statement. This made the project eligible for federal funding.

Two area environmental groups, CATS and Friends of the Fox River, filed suit against the Federal Highway Administration, contending that the project review was inadequate. Attorneys from the Environmental Law and Policy Center (ELPC), a Chicago public interest group, represented the groups.

On August 22, FHWA rescinded the 2008 Record of Decision. Based on that rescission, the lawsuit has been dismissed.

Joining these groups to oppose the Prairie Parkway and promote improvements to existing highways were a coalition of environmental and public interest groups, including ELPC, Openlands, and the Sierra Club.

There has been extensive local opposition to the project. Voters in five Kane and Kendall County townships crossed by the Prairie Parkway route voted to oppose the Prairie Parkway in advisory referenda in 2007 and 2008.

Beginning in 2010 IDOT cut the increasingly unpopular Prairie Parkway from its six-year Highway Improvement Program and continued to omit it from subsequent annual updates.

In April of this year IDOT shifted the former Prairie Parkway federal earmarks to adding lanes and other improvements to IL 47 from I-80 to Caton Farm Road south of Yorkville and to US 34 from IL 47 to Orchard Road. These two projects are estimated in the six-year improvement program to cost about \$135 million.

Although the federal action effectively cancels the Prairie Parkway, the state continues to protect a 400-foot-wide corridor between the two interstates. The corridor

protection, filed in 2007, restricts affected property owners from making improvements to their property without state review and approval.

A recent change to state law will require IDOT to conduct a public hearing by 2017 if it wishes to continue the property restrictions in the corridor.

In 2007 the 47 Plus Coalition was formed to promote improvements to Illinois 47 and other existing roadways as alternatives to the Prairie Parkway. Coalition members include: American Farmland Trust; Audubon Society, Chicago Section; Aux Sable Creek Watershed Group; Center for Neighborhood Technology; Citizens Against the Sprawlway; Environmental Law and Policy Center; Friends of the Fox River; Kendall Citizens for Farmland Protection; Natural Resources Defense Council; Nettle Creek Watershed Conservancy; Openlands; Prairie Rivers Network; and Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club.

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Note:

The Federal Highway Administration's rescission document, issued August 22, is available on the Citizens Against the Sprawlway web site: <http://www.sprawlway.org>

The current six-year IDOT Highway Improvement Program listing the planned improvements to Illinois 47 and US 34 is available at: [http://www.dot.il.gov/hip1318/html/district/dist\\_3.pdf](http://www.dot.il.gov/hip1318/html/district/dist_3.pdf)