

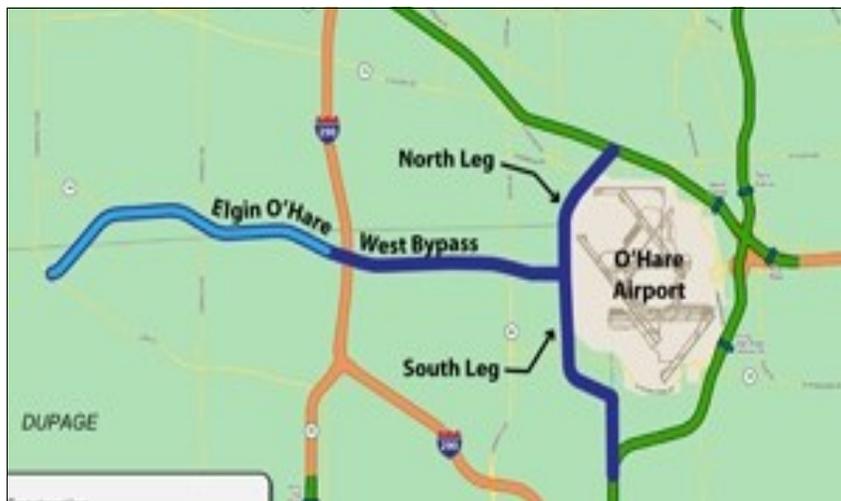
# Elgin-O'Hare Western Access project clears last federal hurdle

[Paul Merrion](#) January 23, 2013

Construction of the \$3.4 billion Elgin-O'Hare Western Access project — one of the Chicago region's top transportation priorities — can start this spring after winning final federal approval.

Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood called Sen. Richard Durbin, D-Ill., Wednesday night to tell him the Federal Highway Administration will sign off on an agreement that allows the federally funded Elgin-O'Hare expressway to be converted to a tollroad.

“This project, combined with the surrounding development and other infrastructure projects, stands to create as many as 65,000 direct and indirect jobs by 2040. Increased connectivity with other modes of transportation and dramatic reductions in congestion and delays will save drivers \$145 million annually in time and fuel costs,” Sen. Durbin said in a statement. “It's exactly the type of nationally significant project we need to ensure that Illinois remains the transportation hub of the Midwest.”



*An Illinois Tollway map of the planned western access to O'Hare. The darker blue would be new construction. The area in lighter blue is to be extended and widened.*

The idea of western access to O'Hare International Airport has been discussed since the late 1960s, and the plan evolved to widen and extend the Elgin-O'Hare Expressway to create a western entrance to O'Hare, where Chicago has long-range plans to build a new terminal if airlines approve. The project also includes a new tollroad on the western side of the airport to create a bypass connecting interstates 90 and 294.

Mr. LaHood also called freshman Rep. Tammy Duckworth, D-Hoffman Estates, who represents the area where much of the Elgin-O'Hare project will be built.

“The beginning of the Elgin-O'Hare Western Access Project is a tremendous victory for the 8th congressional district,” she said in a statement. “As I discussed with Secretary LaHood, this project will cut the commuting time of my constituents and give our businesses the opportunity to move their products more efficiently throughout Illinois and across the country.”

The tollway said it hoped to start construction in 2013 when it announced plans last May to hire design and engineering firms for [detailed planning work](#).

No money was attached to the final federal approval, but a combination of federal, state and local funding is expected to provide \$300 million on top of \$3.1 billion in tollway funding to build the project. The 2005 federal transportation bill earmarked \$140 million in planning funds for the project.

Read more: <http://www.chicagobusiness.com/article/20130123/NEWS02/130129884/elgin-ohare-western-access-project-clears-last-federal-hurdle#ixzz2luF3CtXD>

