

Tollway eyes county forest preserve land

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The idea of tearing up chunks of forest preserve land to allow for the expansion of the Tri-State Tollway has barely been floated to county commissioners.

But the mere mention of it has put environmentalists on alert, as they prepare to fight a plan that will be introduced next month.

The Illinois State Toll Highway Authority wants to purchase 16 acres, in increments, along Interstate 294, from Touhy Avenue to Lake-Cook Road -- a plan being met with mixed response.

"The days of agencies just coming in and doing things like this are over," said Benjamin Cox of Friends of the Forest Preserves.

But Cmsr. Gregg Goslin (R-Glenview) said it's "a necessary evil" to give up forest preserve land to allow tollway expansion.

"The embankments are being pushed out a little bit because the road's being pushed out," he said.

In addition to paying \$2.9 million for the land and \$1.7 million for removing 2,711 trees, the tollway would agree to build bio- swales -- large areas for stormwater runoff. The plan will be presented to the county board July 12.