

**VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE**  
**Report for the Village Council Meeting**  
**3/19/2019**

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>
Council Member New Business - Belmont Underpass Plaque	David Fieldman Village Manager

**SYNOPSIS**

At the request of Commissioner Waldack a proposal to direct staff to prepare and display a plaque honoring Brian Krajewski, George Swimmer and Milton Sees for their contributions to the construction of the Belmont Underpass has been placed on the New Business Agenda. Pursuant to Village Council policy, this topic shall be a discussion item only to allow the Village Council to direct staff to prepare an action for consideration at a later date.

**STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT**

N/A

**FISCAL IMPACT**

N/A

**RECOMMENDATION**

Action at the discretion of Village Council

**BACKGROUND**

Commissioner Waldack submitted the following request for consideration by the Village Council as New Business:

The purpose of this item is to recognize three individuals whose outstanding and persistent efforts were largely responsible for the completion of one of Downers Grove's great infrastructure and safety projects.

In these days of trying to plan and build infrastructure and to gain funding for such projects, one of the greatest local achievements is the Belmont Underpass. Over a lengthy timespan, many units of government and individuals worked to complete the project. However, three individuals are chiefly responsible for starting this journey, gathering the various stakeholders, and gaining the funding that allowed for project completion, an over \$60M project that cost Village taxpayers \$0.

These individuals should be recognized with a plaque to be placed in an appropriate place at the Belmont Station. These individuals are: Brian Krajewski, George Swimmer, and Milton Sees.

### **Brian Krajewski: Former Mayor of Downers Grove**

The ICC recognized two crossings in Downers Grove they believed were unsafe. In a campaign for the 81st District, two of the candidates were aware of these crossings and George Swimmer made the crossings his campaign platform. Both George and Brian lost their bids, and Brian ran for Mayor of Downers Grove. He took up the challenge and assembled people he thought would be necessary to get the project going. The week before the group met, there were two fatal accidents at Downers Grove crossings.

Brian assembled a group consisting of Illinois General Assembly officials, The Illinois Commerce Commission, a citizen representative (George Swimmer) IDOT, METRA, RTA, he BNSF RR, and others. DuPage County was also involved. The tangled web of funding was only part of the challenge as there were issues regarding design, ownership of the roads, and private property. The ICC was willing to fund part of the project but had requirements. METRA was concerned with their lots and parking. The BNSF was concerned with the construction and safety etc. The County was concerned with ownership of the road and funding would not be possible unless one entity owned the road. The group met monthly and there were constant changes to the decision-makers of the entities involved. There were changes to budgets of funding entities and other challenges. Meetings were often held at Village Hall. The Village Council had to acquire properties and review design plans. Brian met with owners involved as well as meeting METRA's concerns. Brian Krajewski was a catalyst that began this process and started the committee and kept the project going. He deserves to have his name recognized for his efforts and persistence.

### **George Swimmer**

George has been a long-time advocate for railroad safety. He has appeared before the Council many times over the years addressing safety issues and concerns. His efforts have saved lives over the years and he continues to make it his passion. George ran for Representative of the 81st District with his major campaign issue being railroad safety and over and under passes to save lives. As stated above, Brian and George met to address a Belmont Underpass. When the committee was formed. George was the Downers Grove Citizen representative. George was knowledgeable and, as we know, very persistent. Ideas flowed from the committee, including getting written opinions from area mayors and officials to state the importance of an underpass for access to a Trauma 1 Facility Good Samaritan Hospital. The committee work of gathering information and constantly lobbying changing stakeholder representatives with changing budgets takes a careful mix of persistence and patience.

If George had not made this his platform issue and his work on this committee, we would not have a Belmont Underpass.

### **Milton Sees**

Milton was in charge of IDOT when the final funding was approved. While Brian and George had begun the process, the final piece was the ever-challenging importance of funding. Stakeholders like the ICC, METRA, BNSF, DuPage County, the Village Council(s) and others were set, the last piece of funding was needed to get the project engineering and construction going. This rested on the State and the appropriate department. This fell on IDOT and its secretary. In a cash-strapped state budget, the funding of \$8 M was going to be a hard sell and an unwelcome budget item. Milton was a strong proponent and insisted on putting the expenditure in his budget. In spite of hard lobbying by the then Village Council, Milton defended it and managed to get it in his budget. As a result, the final funding for the Underpass was approved.

These three individuals deserve at least special mention to be associated with this major, life-saving project.

The plaque currently located at the Belmont Underpass reads as follows:

Dedicated to the People of  
The Village of Downers Grove  
In the Year 2012  
Martin T. Tully, Mayor

METRA  
Board of Directors  
Larry A. Huggins, Acting Chairman  
Paul C. Darley  
Don A. De Graff  
James C. Labelle  
Mike W. McCoy  
Arlene J. Mulder  
Brad S. O'Halloran  
John E. Partelow  
Stanley C. Rakestraw  
Jack R. Schaffer  
William A. Widmer  
Alexander D. Clifford, Executive Director/CEO

PROJECT FUNDING  
Metra  
Illinois Department of Transportation  
Illinois Commerce Commission  
BNSF Railway  
Federal Transit Administration

SPECIAL RECOGNITION  
County of DuPage  
Village of Downers Grove  
Carole R. Doris, Past Chairman Metra Board of Directors 2003-2011

## **ATTACHMENTS**