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NEWS

Rep. Rita Calls New 294-57 Interchange Opening Welcome News
Major Construction Project Should Bring Real Economic Opportunity to Southland, Illinois

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BLUE ISLAND – State Rep. Bob Rita calls the opening of the new Interstate 294/57 interchange connecting the two major highways in the south suburbs a key piece for economic revitalization in the Southland.

Gov. Quinn, Tollway and local officials appeared Saturday to officially open the interchange that connected I-294 (the Tri-State Tollway) and I-57, along with realigning part of Dixie Creek. The project has been part of the Tollway’s \$12 billion capital program and is estimated to pump more than \$700 million into the local economy.

Rep. Rita played a critical role in turning the project from a big idea into reality, pushing for early state funding for critical engineering work and overseeing its progress as chairman of the Illinois House Tollway Oversight Committee. He sees these as key reasons why the interchange is important for the region:

- A \$700 million shot in the arm for the Southland economy, including thousands of construction and permanent jobs
- Real savings – Drivers can save 25 travel hours and \$4 million a year in fuel from being able to more directly connect with I-294 and I-57
- More opportunities for minority contractors and workers and better local access to get to work and home

Rep. Rita considers the opening of the interchange a challenge now to the area to turn potential into reality.

“Instead of focusing on the signs of struggle and frustration all of us deal with here, it’s time for a turnaround,” Rita said. “I look forward to seeing the jobs and businesses and opportunities we’ve talked about for so long become more than just talk. It’s an exciting time and we should all be hopeful for a better tomorrow.”

Rita also credited his Southland colleagues in the House for supporting the interchange’s potential.

“I am glad to stand with Rep. Rita and my fellow Southland legislators for working to make this day happen,” said Rep. Anthony DeLuca, D-Chicago Heights, who as mayor for Chicago Heights helped support the project early on. “This is an important day and I look forward to seeing this region grow and prosper. I thank Rep. Rita for his leadership and everyone who helped with this important transportation initiative for this region and our state.”

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