

DISTRICT 202 COMMUNITY COLUMN

By Dr. John Harper
Superintendent of Schools
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Sometimes, things are more than what they appear to be.

For example, the issue of where District 202 locates its planned transportation facility is about more than simply just where we will park our buses or the possible use of a piece of land years from now.

The real issue is that our community clearly recognized the need for such a facility, and that District 202 is committed to doing what is right for the entire community, doing what it has told us to do and honoring its wishes.

In March 2006, the District 202 community, through the successful building referendum, said that it wanted a transportation facility to improve student transportation services and save our taxpayers significant money, as much as \$1.1 million annually.

We have been working hard ever since to find the right location to house and operate up to 400 buses to serve our ever-growing district. Our original plans changed when residents expressed concerns about the proposed location on district-owned land at the southwest corner of Route 30 and 143rd Street. At the Board of Education's direction, we searched for a suitable alternative site that would meet everyone's needs and hopes.

We firmly believe that the 42 acres at the Route 59/143rd Street, home of the former Ball Glass factory, is by far the best option for our students, taxpayers and the entire District 202 community.

We are so convinced of this that the district is willing to use its legal authority to claim the land through the court system. That we are taking this rare and challenging step only affirms our strong commitment to work for the greater good of our district.

To put it simply, the Route 59/143rd Street site is ideal for District 202. The site is:

- Centrally-located in our 64-square-mile district, making transportation planning and operational logistics more efficient;
- Located away from homes, a key concern for some residents;
- Accessible from two major roadways, and
- Already supported by infrastructure capable of carrying heavy truck traffic.

And, the land has a long history of supporting industrially-zoned enterprises. Plus, it allows us to address a future need right now by providing much-needed storage space in the mostly-unused warehouse on the site.

Having this space now to store any number of resources including books, paper products, furniture, vehicles among many other items will likely save taxpayers the cost of building a warehouse facility later. This was an unexpected, but very attractive feature for District 202.

And, contrary to rumors, we are not aware of any evidence that locating the transportation facility on this site will significantly impact traffic in or around the Village of Plainfield. About the same number of buses are already housed at a single facility outside of District 202 and run through the village and the district on staggered schedules throughout the school day.

District 202 officials recognize that this land may at some point generate significant taxes to both the Village of Plainfield and the school district.

We expect to preserve some frontage property alongside Route 59 for future commercial development as well as at the corner of Route 59 and 143rd Street. We also believe that the future sale and development of some or all of the 40 acres at Route 30 and 143rd Street will compensate for the taxes that the land at 143rd Street and Route 59 might one day generate.

District 202 serves the families of nearly 29,000 students and many thousands more taxpayers who do not have children in our schools. Some are in Plainfield. Many more are outside of the village. We want to do what is right and best for everyone who calls District 202 home.

Dr. John Harper
Superintendent of Schools
Plainfield Community Consolidated School District 202