

Lobbyist, lawmakers pressing their case for Ridge waivers

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The city's top lobbyist and legislators are pressing their case with the Illinois Department of Transportation for waivers on a controversial traffic light plan for Ridge Avenue.

Larry Suffredin, the city's government affairs specialist, along with state Reps. Julie R. Hamos, D-18th, and Jeffrey Schoenberg, D-58th, sat down with IDOT officials last week on the city's request for waivers on the project, Suffredin said.

He said state Sen. Kathleen K. Parker, R-29th, who could not attend the meeting, is also supporting the city on the issue.

In addition, U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-9th, whose home sits along Ridge, has conferred with Illinois Secretary of State Kirk Brown about the \$1.86 million federal project, which is administered through the state agency.

City officials have scheduled a special meeting for 6 p.m. Monday at the Civic Center, 2100 Ridge Ave., to discuss the city's progress on the issue.

Suffredin said the city has submitted two waivers - one that the larger mast-arm traffic signals not be a requirement and, second, that a 4-foot rule be waived.

City officials estimate that if the city were required to comply with the 4-foot rule - placing traffic lights at least that distance from the curb - an estimated 50 trees would have to be removed along the route.